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THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

A Dissertation
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
Curtis Eugene Jensen

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| I. Introduction..... | 1 |
| A. Statement of the Problem..... | 1 |
| B. Culture..... | 5 |
| C. Interrelationships..... | 8 |
| II. Culture's Influence on Christianity..... | 13 |
| A. Culture Affects Theology..... | 13 |
| B. Culture Affects Ecclesiology..... | 31 |
| III. Christianity's Influence on Culture..... | 38 |
| IV. Three Approaches to the Interrelationship..... | 72 |
| A. Jacques Ellul and the Meaning of the City..... | 72 |
| B. Whitehead and the Possibility for Novelty..... | 90 |
| C. Wolfhart Pannenberg and the Power of the Future..... | 104 |
| V. Personal Statement..... | 122 |
| A. Meaning out of Chaos: Theology..... | 122 |
| B. Meaningful Actions: Ethics..... | 134 |
| C. Ecclesiology: Shape and Role of the Church.. | 149 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 173 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

Humankind has long faced the problem of understanding meaning in life and in the world in general. As persons looked at their surroundings much of what they saw was strange, puzzling, even disturbing. Things happened with no seeming reason, not the least happening of which was their existence in the first place. How is it possible to explain that which is unexplainable? If there truly are reasons in life, then these reasons must be in part other than the empirical data readily available to our senses. One of the major puzzles has been the fact that so much of what happens to each seems to be out of personal control. Consequences certainly follow actions, but for the most part it appears that external forces act upon the individual.

It seems that there have been in history two main approaches to this problem of control over one's life and history, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In the first approach, religious understandings were developed that allowed blame or credit to be placed on some transcendent being. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God was seen as Creator, Judge, and the one who knows everything, including the future actions of his creatures. Predestination was a fairly reasonable kind of answer providing that one accepted the existence of the Wholly Other. Just as logically, a feeling that one's actions are predestined might lead to the postulation of a Wholly Other.

In this religious approach to the problem of meaningful actions there are several further divisions. One of the better known typologies is that developed by H. Richard Niebuhr in Christ and Culture.¹ Although he does not begin with a Wholly Other, he mentions five typical answers to explain the Christ and culture inter-

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951).

relationships: 1) Christ in opposition to culture; 2) Christ in agreement with culture; 3) Christ above culture; 4) polarity of Christ and culture; and 5) Christ converting culture. In his presentation of these typical solutions, Niebuhr demonstrates the flaws he sees in each—that is, until he reaches the fifth type. There he makes his own position known, largely through the fact that he presents little adverse criticism of that type. One of the values in the approach used by H. Richard Niebuhr is his sensitivity to the problem of cultural and historical relativity. He even admits that had he lived at another time and place in the history of Christianity it is both possible and probable he would likely have accepted one of the other positions. This kind of openness refreshes. However, despite his awareness of relativity at one level, he discusses the relationships all in one way. In each case Christ is acting in some way related to culture. Granted, this action has definite meaning in an individual's decision as to how to act within the world, but it

still remains one-sided. If a person waits for God to inform him of divine will, this waiting makes him no more potent than if he be totally determined by the world's external forces.

The other major way to explain the unexplainable in man's capabilities seems to be a more secular approach. In this approach cultural and historical relativity is taken as the utmost solution. Each person is as he is because the circumstances of nature and society allow for nothing else. Any control held by the individual over his life involves a very limited sphere of action and decision making. This kind of thinking is evident in part in Reinhold Niebuhr's discussion of Moral Man and Immoral Society,² in which he maintains that although it is possible for an individual to make the right choices--sin is inevitable but not necessary--as people associate in ever larger groups it becomes increasingly difficult for moral action to occur. The kinds of dynamics present in society overrule any ability to act morally in aggregation.

²Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932, 1960)

The intent of this paper then is to examine the ways in which culture and theology are interrelated, to examine the ways in which theology and ecclesiology are affected by today's society, and to determine what sort of theological understanding might be helpful in today's secular world. The approach of Chapters II and III is to present a historical overview of the ways culture has been seen to affect Christianity and Christianity to affect culture. Chapter IV will then present three contemporary approaches to the interrelationships in the works of Jacques Ellul, Alfred North Whitehead and Wolfhart Pannenberg. The final chapter is a personal statement of critique and affirmation.

B. Culture

The usual kinds of definitions of culture deal with man as a maker of things and an acquirer of knowledge. Culture then is considered to include all the attainments of men in a particular location of time and

geography. Nature provides the givens from which man creates his culture. The religious nature of culture is evident in that "Every manifestation of human culture, from ritual and speech to costume and social organization, is directed ultimately to the remodeling of the human organism and the expression of the human personality."³

The element differentiating between culture and religion is that "Culture is interpreted as exhibiting an autonomous orientation, religion as exhibiting a theonomous orientation."⁴ Culture does not create itself from nothing. "Each great differentiation in culture seems to be the outcome, in fact, of a process of syncretism...."⁵

Cultures are added to and subtracted from, but few traits are ever finally lost from a given culture unless that culture falls into total dissolution. One way of viewing culture is as "a compost in which many traits temporarily disappear or become unidentifiable, but few are ever completely lost."⁶ Through this composting, man's history continually becomes his present.

³Lewis Mumford, The Myth of the Machine (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966, 1967), p. 10.

⁴James Luther Adams, Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion (New York: Schocken, 1965, 1970), p. 218.

⁵Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934), p. 107.

⁶Mumford, Myth of the Machine, p. 131.

Civilization is often considered as a separate concept from culture. Although many social changes have led to immediate or eventual dead ends, civilization evolves to a continually "higher" level. In man's chauvinism it is usually the civilization from which one speaks that is believed to have reached the highest presently attainable level. However, biology, physical environment, and culture combine in ways to create different kinds of civilization. I suggest stressing differences in civilization rather than the evaluative adjectives "higher" and "lower." Civilization and culture can grow only by building on themselves.

There are two contrasting views of the way that individual actions fit into culture and civilization. First, "Technics and civilization as a whole are the result of human choices and aptitudes and strivings, deliberate as well as unconscious, often irrational when apparently they are most objective and scientific; but even when they are uncontrollable they are not external."⁷

⁷Mumford, Technics and Civilization, p. 6.

As a contrast to this view of human and cultural autonomy, we read the words of Jacques Ellul:⁸

To me the sociological does not consist of the addition and combination of individual actions. I believe that there is a collective of sociological reality, which is independent of the individual. As I see it, individual decisions are always made within the framework of the sociological reality, itself pre-existent and more or less determinative.

But whether one sees individual man or societal man as the primary emphasis, the question still remains concerning the natural givens of existence. Thus, cultural anthropology fails because it

does not say anything about the essence of man, but only about the stages through which our former ancestors passed. It is also characterized by an especially disagreeable dogmatism regarding the concept of culture itself. Everything which man has created is explained in terms of a particular given culture.... But no cultural anthropologist tells you who has produced the culture, why cultures have changed,⁹ and what has happened in the context of the culture.

Thus the problems of origin and direction still remain unsolved.

C. Interrelationships

⁸Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. xxviii.

⁹Paul Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 119.

It is the thesis of this paper that the Christian religion is related to culture both through environmental givens and through experiencing God's actions. The religious practitioner acquires meaning from the events and history that he inherits, as well as the forces from the unknown, his experience of the mythical. The mythical in turn shapes the rational. Or, "Culture is the expression-form of religion, and religion is the content of culture."¹⁰ To put it further,

It is therefore not justifiable to make a sharp distinction between religion and culture. Religion is always assuming cultural form, and culture is always (like a planet) near to and distant from the ultimate source (and abyss) of meaning.¹¹

Man is both fated and free. All that he is and does is learned from others, but one of those others is his experience of the Wholly Other, and this relationship enables man to a certain extent to choose how to relate to and incorporate those experiences he picks up from his environment.

Ernst Troeltsch analyzed the problem of religious

¹⁰Adams, p. 252.

¹¹Ibid., p. 80.

relativity and resolved that no religion, including Christianity, is absolute. Just as a participant in Eastern culture has significant differences from Western Europeans in other areas of his existence than religion, so also are Eastern and Western religions alien to each other. Troeltsch argues for the "interpenetration" of cultures and religions.¹² He speaks of this interpenetration as a sort of two-way street.

On the one side was the understanding that all doctrines are dependent on social conditions and cannot be understood apart from these social conditions.... But on the other side was the equally important insight that the way in which the social conditions are used by people is largely dependent on their ultimate concern, by their religious convictions and their ethical implications.¹³

The actor thus ends up in a sort of circular process; the interactions are exactly that. Acting in response to one's environment provides new insight and new knowledge of the ultimate, which in turn helps shape the next responsive actions.

The actions of an individual are not determined by

¹²Tillich, p. 233.

¹³Ibid., p. 234.

any one factor, even if that factor be religion. As one element in the total cultural milieu, even as the "content" of culture, religion must recognize the primacy of other claims on the person's life, e.g., technology and secularity today, tribalism of the Old Testament experience. Christianity, and other religions, must walk the fine line of adapting without compromising. Naturally, that religion which "...makes more effective use of the energy resources of its environment...will tend to spread in that environment in more fortunate relation to less effective systems."¹⁴ At the same time religion must see itself as set apart by its concern with the ultimate, able to change and judge as need be.

The trainers at the Center of Metropolitan Ministries In-Service Training in Los Angeles often have used the expression that a person must "act his way into a new way of thinking." One's doing arises from his being just as one's being arises from his doing. An attractive way of saying this is that "...it is not simply a matter of

¹⁴Martin E. Marty, Righteous Empire (New York: Dial Press, 1970), p. 88.

building a 'House' and then discovering man. The man is formed in the building of the 'House.'"¹⁵ Our present identity has developed over centuries of building that "House" of Western civilization and all its elements, good and bad. Historical relativity and accidents of nature are definitely important, but this paper maintains that man can liberate himself from subjection to the human ideas which he inherits by becoming conscious of his place in history. "Both tribal man and secular man see the world from a particular, socially and historically conditioned point of view. But modern secular man knows it, and tribal man did not; therein lies the crucial difference."¹⁶ Tribal man did not study history as a means of discovering the determinants of present identity. A major step in self-determination is learning what has contributed to present lives. Modern man can now begin to recognize those contributing elements into new life scripts.

¹⁵Gibson Winter, Being Free (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 78.

¹⁶Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 30.

CHAPTER II

CULTURE'S INFLUENCE ON CHRISTIANITY

A. Culture Affects Theology

After having said that culture and theology are engaged in thorough interrelationship, let us now turn to discuss some of the ways in which the culture-to-theology flow is primary.

'John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber'....From this it clearly follows that in his whole demeanour and manner of life he made an impression quite different from that of the preacher of repentance on the banks of the Jordan.¹

The accounts say that John attempted to remain pure through asceticism and removal from the sins of the world. Jesus is depicted as a more worldly person, one who lived the life of his time and place to its fullest. John the ascetic stayed in the wilderness. His message spoke harshly of the need for repentance of the evils of the

¹Adolf Harnack, What Is Christianity? (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), p. 88.

world. People came to him away from their everyday lives, hearing and heeding the call for righteous separation. Jesus preached in the towns and synagogues. He met with people in their situations and shared with all in open fellowship. His message also included the need for repentance, but the new Kingdom was among them. Jesus did not attempt to separate himself from life around him but to embrace it fully.

To state the obvious, man first of all belongs to nature. As a natural being man is limited, but man is not just a natural being. "Christ claims...man...always as one who has become human in a culture."² Beginning with the givens of nature, man through his societal and cultural acquisitions builds his "house." Each time in man's history his house is at a different stage of development. Thus,

To be a man means, in the first place, to possess a certain mental and spiritual disposition, determined in such and such a way, and thereby limited and circumscribed; and in the second place, it means to be situated, with this disposition, in an historical

²H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 69.

environment which in its turn is also limited and circumscribed.³

One helpful way to look at the problem of relativity is exemplified in H. Richard Niebuhr's discussion of responsible ethics.⁴ All actions occur within the context of a system of interrelations. These interrelations are not atomic events but are a part of an ongoing dynamic historical process. The crucial factor is not law but how each action affects that system of interrelations. My response at any point in this process is based on my relations to myself, to nature and to other persons. Man's actions can and must be guided by goals and laws, but only guided.

It has often been remarked that the great decisions which give a society its specific character are functions of emergency situations in which a community has to meet a challenge. Doubtless ideals, hopes and drives toward a desirable future play their part in such decisions; inherited laws are also important in them. Yet the decision on which the future depends and whence the new law issues is a decision made in response to action upon the society, and this action is guided by interpretation of what is going on.⁵

Truth must be related to the social system in

³Harnack, p. 13.

⁴H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

⁵Ibid., p. 59.

order for it to have meaning for its contemporary persons. Any individual's understanding of truth depends on his relation to his society as well as his society's relation to history.

The conclusions at which we arrive individually in seeking to be Christians in our culture are relative in at least four ways. They depend on the partial, incomplete, fragmentary knowledge of the individual; they are relative to the measure of his faith and his unbelief; they are related to the historical position he occupies and to the duties of his station in society; they are concerned with the relative values of things.

Simply stated the only way to understand one's religion is to begin with personal and societal history.

In order to understand fully an individual's place in history, history must be seen as a continuous process. Whether or not it is possible to view religious development as a process progressing from a lesser to a greater understanding, it can certainly be seen that religious understanding evolves. Jesus is quite decidedly a product of his religious and cultural background. The continuity between Old and New Testaments is necessarily

⁶Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, p. 234.

affirmed in order to appreciate that in the New Testament which is in truth a new development. The past is definitely past, yet it is with us in the present through its results, its influence, its closing and opening of possible routes of progress for civilization. The elements in our historical compost may not be present in their particularities, but they are there to fertilize. "Whatever happened to some men in the past affects virtually all men today. This was not always true. In short, all history is catching up with us, and this very difference, paradoxically, underscores our break with the past."⁷

Once again, the difference between ancient and modern man is that modern man is capable of conscious awareness of his history and its effects on his life.

Conscious awareness of history and environment helps clarify many puzzles in life. Still, even for modern man life is filled with occurrences that go contrary to the general understandings of good, of right, and even seemingly of nature. One of the usual ways that has been

⁷Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 17.

developed for explaining the unexplainable is ritual.⁸

By means of ritual, I suggest, early man first confronted and overcame his own strangeness, identified himself with cosmic events outside the animal pale, and allayed the uneasiness created by his huge but still largely unusable cerebral capacities. At a much later stage these inchoate impulses would come together under the rubric of religion.⁹

Often the kinds of dissonances that appear have to do with crises or catastrophes that shake men out of his optimism and progressivism. These crises might be natural events such as major earthquakes.¹⁰ They might be outbreaks of war; the great depression of the 1930s; Reconstruction of the Southern states after the War Between the States. In each of these cases as in many more, the optimism of religion was forced to reconcile in some way the tragic sense of everyday life and history.

There is no denying the increasing complexity of human existence. The superficially easy way out of the complexity is to seek simple answers, and simple answers tend to be absolute. Simple answers also tend to rest on that which we know to have happened in the past, whether

⁸Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1970, 1971), p. 51.

⁹Lewis Mumford, The Myth of the Machine (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966, 1967), p. 62.

¹⁰Paul Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 54.

or not it can be seen as the best answer. In other words, the known seems better than the unknown, though it be inadequate. "To the degree that fear and disruption prevail in society, men tend to seek an absolute; if it does not exist, they project it."¹¹ In fact up until the recent years of business enterprise, the primary purpose of all human institutions was to prevent change.¹² The institution may begin amidst enthusiasm and charisma, but it soon begins to take on law and form.

Until a firm basis for order was laid down, we can now see, it was almost as necessary to curb man's creativity as his destructiveness: that is perhaps why the whole weight of culture, down to modern times, has centered on its ties with the past, so that even fresh departures would be disguised as a replenishing of old sources.¹³

Loyalty to the familiar is an easy concept to understand. What then often follows is the building of ideologies that confuse those loyalties with Christian claims. Christianity becomes an important glue in the self-preservation of a given society. Christianity can be lulled into this confusion by complacency due to apparent

¹¹Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934), p. 42.

¹²Peter F. Drucker, Technology, Management and Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 158.

¹³Mumford, Myth of the Machine, p. 57.

progress and prosperity. The confusion may relate to the fact that the leadership has consciously or unconsciously aligned itself with a particular social class.¹⁴ If the leadership is convinced it has the right answers, those answers become the Establishment, and Establishments seem to be blind and deaf to alternate views. Cultural loyalty does not play favorites among the various theological viewpoints. Though we may be attempting to be radical biblicists, our approach even to that must of course be culturally determined. Thus H. Richard Niebuhr maintained that "...the Fundamentalist attack on so-called liberalism --by which cultural Protestantism is meant--is itself an expression of a cultural loyalty, a number of Fundamentalist interests indicate."¹⁵

Related to the task of conserver is that of sanctioner. Survival may be the issue. Ideologies must facilitate the functioning of society.

...it is safe to say that the culture which allows any kind of place for religion and tradition likes to have the church around, likes to have a minister around.

¹⁴Martin E. Marty, Righteous Empire (New York: Dial Press, 1970), p. 97.

¹⁵Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, p. 102.

It seeks some sort of sanction for its actions, some sort of baptism of its rites, some sort of soothing of its anxieties.¹⁶

The church helps to form and affirm the "common faith," and in turn is partially formed by it.

In its role as sanction-giver, the church easily falls into the habit of going along with the common symbols, staying away from abrasive and prophetic utterances. One writer has said that

The sad truth is that the Methodist Church is much more like a chameleon than like a prophet in its encounter with culture. We tend to reflect the values of our environment rather than transform them...

The best way to illustrate this is to observe how strongly the quantitative standards of valuation of our business society have captivated our value judgments about how successful the church is.¹⁷

It hardly needs to be said that this leads to all kinds of contradictory results. As an obvious example from our own history, we need only look at the Civil War. Both North and South bolstered their armies and their citizens by the use of Christian symbols--God was on both sides.

Political authority is an often discussed issue in

¹⁶Marty, p. 147.

¹⁷Thomas C. Oden, The Community of Celebration (Nashville: Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1964), p. 83.

the New Testament. That which is in Caesar's image must be returned to him, while that which is in God's image must be returned to Him. This probably is the best known reference to Jesus' statements on the subject. However, Romans 13 is an oft-quoted admonition by Paul to obey the proper authorities.

...the New Testament preached obedience to the established political authority, although this could never again be an absolute, and thus in a sense the tension between the spiritual and the temporal which was to characterize the history of the Christian era was born with the New Testament.¹⁸

For some the solution was to maintain a theocratic state. If the church and government are one, then no confusion can exist. But with such a solution man overlooked his finitude and his tendency to seek those absolute answers, and theocracies quickly tended toward political systems that used the church as sanction. The church in turn gained power, wealth and security; it lost its ties to the religious dimension. In the words of Ivan Illich,¹⁹

Eastern Christendom never really succeeded in freeing itself from the Justinian paradigm: The Christian

¹⁸Jordan Bishop, Hypotheses on Church, School and Social Control (Cuernavaca: CIDOC, 1970), p. 1/1f.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 1/8

Empire is to some extent the Church, and it is within this context that the dialectic between the spiritual and the temporal is limited to a dialectic between the Sacerdotum and the Imperium within a professedly Christian society.

Eastern and Western Christianity both fell into the confusion between church and state, although theocracy as an intentional form was not necessarily the case.

Protestantism points with great pride to the Reformation as it attempted, among other things, to emphasize essential differences between national life and church life. But the results of the Reformation were ambiguous at best. "Often those churches which most accent separation of church and state are most insistent on seeing formal, legal interaction of the two in national affairs."²⁰ Civil power almost always aided the Protestant reforms. It seems that the primary criterion for deciding whether or not church and state were getting confused was the agreeability of that confusion to the party doing the judging.

A church Establishment need not be an official or

²⁰Marty, p. 53.

legal establishment. In our own national history religious institutions had little membership and effect in the early years.²¹ Nobody wanted to harm religion but it was viewed with extensive apathy. The small percentage of religious leaders cajoled and wheedled to keep separate church and state, but in the process successfully developed a de facto establishment that Americans have lived with ever since. The strong sense of manifest destiny evident during the "discovery" of the West is an unfortunate exemplification of the mission of the Establishment. Marty writes, "Since 1833-34 church and state have been separate in the formal legal sense. But in the mores, in the subtler coercions of social pressure, the churches have been established right down into our own time."²² And, "As one form of the national establishment, dependent so often on the goodwill of the generally religious larger community, the churches are usually seen to be domesticated, socially irrelevant in a revolutionary world."²³ The author also makes the statement that the

²¹Ibid., p. 46.

²²Ibid., p. 53.

²³Ibid., p. 66.

Presidential election of 1960 was a significant step in the dis-establishment of the Protestant community, as "...the symbolism of President as quasi-Protestant priest was changed."²⁴

One of the religious controversies facing the Old Testament Hebrews dealt with the contrast between Yahweh as a mobile deity and the baals as deities of specific locations. "Placed" religion readily leads to idolization of nation, place and culture. This kind of idolization was constantly attacked by the prophetic voices of the Hebrews.²⁵

The problem hinges on the difficulties of taking an absolute monotheistic stand in relation to other beliefs. To believe in the superiority of Yahweh, the "onliness" of Yahweh, is automatically to judge the beliefs of others as inferior. With the intimate ties between religion and culture, it is a short step then to assume that our culture is also superior, and that our religion can only flourish in our particular culture.

²⁴Ibid., p. 62.

²⁵Ibid., p. 43f.

Therefore, in order to save the unsaved peoples of the world, the first step is to remake their culture like ours, to form them in our own image. The willingness and ability to engage openly in dialogue with varying religions and cultures is all but non-existent.²⁶

Paradoxically, two kinds of occurrences help bring about a placed religion.²⁷ First, persecution by external forces drives the believers inward into a sort of secret society. Although displaced and alienated from the general culture, a tightly knit sub-culture forms, one of the boasts of which is that the believers are worthy of their being persecuted. The author's personal experience with several young "Jesus people" leads him to affirm this statement. The more usual force leading to placed Christianity is the legal or pseudo-legal establishment of it as the official national religion. Constantine's decision to condone Christianity affected many basic changes in the church's relations to its culture, changes that made its existence easier although not necessarily more Christian.

²⁶Ibid., p. 23.

²⁷Ibid., p. 48f.

Christianity belonged to the Roman Empire.

Several kinds of ties exist that can bind Christianity to a particular culture:²⁸

Historically dominant was the legal tie...ideological ties...A Christian philosophy of culture was sought and maintained. The moral tie was a corollary of the other two...Finally, a cultural tie, in the production of art and artifact, was assumed....

Modern unbelief in the placement of Christianity stretches back at least to the Copernican revolution, when no longer was there an accepted place for God to exist.²⁹ America today is faced with great mobility, the chaos of modern cities, technology, a growing appreciation and sometimes fear of pluralism. No longer does one know his religious identity as an American Protestant without struggle and reflection. These kinds of new concerns along with the crises of world wars and depressions, caused the disaffection with the social gospel movement in the early years of this century. Christ and culture definitely cannot be identical if Christ is good and culture is questionable in value. Just about the time America

²⁸Martin E. Marty, Second Chance for American Protestants (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 15-17.

²⁹Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 33.

feels everything is progressing well, catastrophe seems always to strike.

Much of the time the way that theology is affected by culture is as a reactor, or to put it more positively, as an apologist. Man has his ideal views of God and existence, but the real world is filled with crises and dissonances. The struggle continually is to reconcile the real to the ideal. A crisis need not be immediate in the way that an earthquake is immediate. Cultures decay over long periods of years as immigrants do not always recognize immediately the strangeness of their new settings. Theology is an essential tool in reconstruction of one's identity. Immediate crises that can trigger theological responses and changes can occur at several levels.³⁰ Immediately local signs of corruption are often the most obvious triggers. Distant signs of corruption may not be seen to affect one personally, but certainly an issue such as the Vietnam War soon strikes home. A sudden positive change in fortune may cause sudden releases of anxieties

³⁰Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The New Left and the Abolitionists: Romantic Radicalism in America," Soundings, LIV: 2 (Summer 1971), 155-157.

and reconstruction of theological understandings. Some of the specific crises that have forced Christianity to engage in rather imaginative and sometimes pathetically amusing apologetics are the Copernican world view, Newton's mechanics of motion, evolutionary theory, world wars, natural disasters and the massacre of millions of Jews in World War II. It is not enough for a God to fill in the gaps, for the gaps seem to become more perverse all the time. Also, it seems strange that the movement from the emphasis on rural life to the emphasis on urban life should be seen as a crisis situation. Yet Christian symbolism has been built largely on rural life, and we will see how decadent is the city in the eyes of men such as Jacques Ellul.^{30a}

The city definitely has an effect on styles of existence, the city and the technology which comes with it. "Without a shadow of a doubt, major technological change creates the need for social and political innovation.... it demands innovation."³¹ Today's religious

^{30a}I suppose that my grandmother was not unusual in her great dismay when I decided to attend school in the Los Angeles area. Youth lose their innocence when they go to the "big city."

³¹Drucker, p. 123.

person has his prior commitment to those demands and possibilities that are provided by the urban society. For example, Marty points out that Roman Catholics generally differ in belief from persons of other religious persuasions on the subject of birth control. Yet studies show that practices tend to be similar among those differing belief systems.³²

The black experience in the United States also demonstrates culture's priority over theology. More than any other group of immigrants, the black slaves were deprived of their personal and cultural identities on being transported to North America. Names were given to them by their owners and families were separated. The stories are all too familiar. Religion was denied the slave along with the rest of his African identity. Two statements from Righteous Empire illustrate this point:

The blacks' relation to dominant Protestantism was ambiguous. On the one hand, the degree to which Negroes accepted evangelical Christianity, adapted it, and lived by it, was an impressive compliment to its spiritual power....On the other hand, every aspect of

³²Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 20f.

the black-and-Protestant bond was colored and conditioned by the fact that only parts of the evangelical experience were permitted them. Even³³ these parts were transformed by the white experience.

How effective the ministry to slaves was can best be determined by the sense of mystification one slave-owner expressed when after years of orthodox catechism training one of his slaves replied to the question, 'In whose image were you made?' 'In the image of de debil, master.' He had gotten the point not from the catechism but from the ethos that came with his religion.³⁴

In sum, Christianity, as any religion or element in a culture, is historically, sociologically, physically and biologically conditioned. The Gospel is not an abstract teaching. The New Testament accounts existed within a particular historical context and in order for them to be presently relevant, the process of translation must occur anew. All the most sophisticated historical tools are permitted and essential for this task.

B. Culture Affects Ecclesiology

Ideally ecclesiology should be based upon and should reflect the theology that is proclaimed by reli-

³³Ibid., p. 27.

³⁴Ibid., p. 29.

gious persons in the particular organization. It is certainly true that the world must set both the theological and the ecclesiological agendas in that those agendas must be able to respond with integrity to the needs and demands of the world. But the unfortunate state of reality is that the world has been allowed to take over top priority and the church has been chameleonic as it attempts to take on the most expedient coloring.

One of the several ways that this shaping occurs comes from the need people have to find simple answers for the complexities of life's problems.

People in changing cultures often desire to be undisturbed by transcultural forces. Many rebel when the church does become radical, when it speaks out about the affairs of men. The counsel then comes: The task of the churches is not to concern themselves with life in the world but to snatch people from it. Form enclaves. Gather groups of people who³⁵ will turn their back on the world. Provide security.

Alvin Toffler even goes so far as to suggest that it is a legitimate strategy in the midst of "future shock" for us to establish such enclaves, both for living in the known

³⁵Marty, Second Chance, p. 7.

past and also for living in the more experimental fringes of the future. However, he does not suggest that this be the desired role of the church.

One phenomenon that has provided impetus for the present church situation in the United States was the influx of immigrants, both slave and free. Like seeks like, or often like is forced to live with like. Thus,

Between 1820 and 1900, nineteen million immigrants arrived, one-fourth of them Irish and almost all of these urban....It was their muscle that built much of the city....The church (Roman Catholic) was an institution they could control, and they gravitated to it just as blacks had done in their own time when they were denied access to other forms of social life or other means of finding status.³⁶

Different peoples with different backgrounds and identities felt different needs. Their churches consequently were a logical place, in many cases the only place, where those needs could be safely met. The Reconstruction of the South after the Civil War only intensified and rigidified the differences between geographical areas and sociological conditions. In order for there to be a unified body of

³⁶Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 159.

Christ it is necessary that men be able to view others as full human beings, equal in the sight of God if not politically and socially similar.

All this is to say that denominational structures depend more on one's culture, location, or language than on religious beliefs.³⁷ In the Christian Church in our nation, to belong means of necessity to be a member of a particular denomination, to be located at some special point. Yet denominationalism is also seen to be "an unacknowledged hypocrisy"³⁸ because of its dependence on and affirmation of social class differences.

For the denominations, churches, sects, are sociological groups whose principle of differentiation is to be sought in their conformity to the order of social classes and castes....Denominationalism thus represents the moral failure of Christianity.³⁹

The pluralism of American society effectively broke any notion of Christendom, and the spread throughout the American West increasingly fragmented the bodies of religious believers. Immigrants brought with themselves their own versions of national churches as a part of their cultural

³⁷Ibid., p. 136.

³⁸H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York: Holt, 1929), p. 6.

³⁹Ibid., p. 25.

contribution to America, they were then forced into a competitive situation with those of other cultural backgrounds.⁴⁰ Denominations could be understood neutrally--people from different backgrounds and different locations tend to form their own church groups. But the openness toward other groups is difficult to maintain. In any case "Many Protestants did not want to be denominated in such sociologically neutral terms. They wanted to speak of themselves as the Church and of all the false churches around them as sects and cults."⁴¹

Once again, I repeat the thesis that denominations as a form of church organization depend not on any self-conscious theological understanding of the church, but on the whims of history. The many divisions of the church depend on such factors as "exaggerated individualism, the denial of any objective truth, the assertion that a man's religion is his private affair" and the association "of like-minded individuals."⁴²

Setting aside the development of denominations,

⁴⁰Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 136.

⁴¹Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 69.

⁴²Alexander C. Zabriskie, "Secularism and Church Unity," in J. Richard Spann (ed.) The Christian Faith and Secularism (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 248.

another way churches are affected by our secular society has to do with bureaucratic structures. Stated simply, the church must function in the world, and the world today is heavily organized. In order for the church to have an impact on anything but a very limited and localized scale, it seems to require a large and efficient operation. There would seem to be no way of avoiding hierarchical structures, bureaucratic organizations. The expressed polity gives way to the necessary polity.⁴³ Formal or informal organizations require the same kinds of working bureaucracies as stated in the following:⁴⁴

Bureaucracies demand specific types of personnel. This personnel is specific not only in terms of its functions and requisite skills, but also in terms of its psychological characteristics. Bureaucratic institutions both select and form the personnel types they require for their operation....Where possible, the traditional formulas will be retained to legitimate the new social-psychological types; where this is no longer possible, they will have to be modified in order to permit such legitimation....The social-psychological type emerging in the leadership of the bureaucratized religious institutions is, naturally, similar to the bureaucratic personality in other institutional contexts--activist, pragmatically oriented, not given to administratively irrelevant reflection, skilled in

⁴³Peter L. Berger, The Noise of Solemn Assemblies (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), p. 163f.; Niebuhr, Social Sources, p. 14f.; Paul M. Harrison, Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. viif.

⁴⁴Berger, Sacred Canopy, pp. 139f.

interpersonal relations, 'dynamic' and conservative
at the same time, and so forth....

The scale of operations necessitates such a bureaucratic
structure.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIANITY'S INFLUENCE ON CULTURE

It is possible to grant that theology and culture are interrelated and still attempt to sort out more specifically those ways in which the lines of influence move from theology to culture. In fact, this paper will argue that this is the preferred way to view the action of religion in the world, although ideals and practices seldom correspond. The approach of this chapter is historical. I will trace through history some of the ways that Christianity has had a decided influence on culture.

In the words of Jordan Bishop, "Since Constantine the Church has appeared, in a varying number of ways, as a powerful and often dominant institution in society....The Church (is) a mythogenic institution...."¹ Once again in the interrelational understanding, "...theology resembles the theory of law. It has a creatively individual character that is partially determined by its historical

¹Jordan Bishop, Hypotheses on Church, School and Social Concern (Cuernavaca: CIDCC, 1970), p. 1/7.

rootage, and on the basis of its inheritance it co-creates norms."² The kinds of influences of most interest then are the creation of myths or symbols, and the creation of norms.

In much of the discussion found concerning effects on culture, theological understandings are only a part of the picture that consists more often in discussion of Church and religion in general. This may be the main point to make. However, the question still remains: What can our theology do for us in the face of culture? Or to the face of culture? If the Church is in truth a mythogenic institution, what difference can this make? How can theology help us interpret our world?

One of the first major steps in man's attempts to discover order and to control the order of nature was magic. Magicians tried to conquer the external environment. In fact, Jacques Ellul argues for viewing magic as an important early step in the growth of the technological society. Technique has evolved both along the concrete

²James Luther Adams, Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion (New York: Schocken, 1965, 1970), p. 168.

path of "man the maker" as well as along the more spiritual path of magic.³ With the integral relationship of magic to ritual and religion per se, we see one early example of the effect of religion on culture. We attempt to create marvels, since we already know that marvels do of course happen. If we experience the world to be orderly in most instances, then there must be a sensible way to explain and create the unexplainable.

Thus early in man's development the circular process of order and ritual began. Enough of life's activity seems orderly to warrant viewing order as important and innate in the world. Yet life is confusing and changing so it necessitates the imposition of order. Magic is an early attempt at an orderly explanation and control over events. The development of time-consciousness contributed to orderly understanding, and in turn Lewis Mumford points to the effect of the ordered routines of monastery life. "The application of quantitative methods of thought to the study of nature had its first manifestation in the regular

³Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 73.

measurement of time; and the new mechanical conception of time arose in part out of the routine of the monastery."⁴ "...Ritual creates order and is order...."⁵ Ritual led to the mechanization of men which preceded the development of machine- and technique-oriented culture. But the discipline of ritual played a negative as well as positive role in human development as it related to creativity. It both enhanced early human development and caused development to proceed at an extremely slow pace.⁶ Orderly understandings are necessary but tend to block the discovery of new insights and answers.

Another kind of outgrowth of monastery life and its order was the development of the work ethic. This can be seen especially as traced to the Benedictine Order beginning in the sixth century.

(This order) distinguished itself from many similar monastic organizations by imposing a special obligation beyond the usual ones of constant prayer, obedience to their superiors, the acceptance of poverty, and the daily scrutiny of each other's conduct. To all these duties they added a new one: ⁷the performance of daily work as a Christian duty.

⁴Lewis Mumford, Technics and Civilization (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934), p. 12.

⁵Lewis Mumford, The Myth of the Machine (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966, 1967), p. 66.

⁶Ibid., p. 68.

⁷Ibid., p. 264.

The regularity and efficiency of the monastery laid ground-work both for capitalism and for further mechanization. But added to the example of the monastic life-style was a special doctrine, the "...purely theological doctrine of the Treasury of Salvation: the piling up of earthly merits through continence and sacrifice for the sake of an immense future reward in Heaven."⁸

Much has been written about the medieval Church and its authoritative status in its time. It established limits within which freedom could be exercised. These limits depended on custom, but the basis of authority remained Bible and liturgy.⁹ Yet the Church did not control completely--once again a dialectic between sacred and secular appears to be the case. "...The secularization and transference of religious values and concepts as a relatively autonomous political and legal science develops. The Church in turn is deeply affected by this movement and in some cases the borrowing is mutual."¹⁰ One of the positive developments of medievalism was the establishment of

⁸Ibid., p. 275.

⁹Bishop, p. 1/14.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 1/15.

colleges and universities. However, once the medieval synthesis of Biblical, liturgical, and ecclesiastical authority, and political or secular authority lost meaning, then "Christian colleges" lost their importance, even their reason for being.¹¹

The school is an institution which was created at least in part by the Church with the intended purpose of inculcating myths and value systems.¹² As secularization increasingly transformed the school in the nineteenth century, it has gone on to create and sustain myths on its own power. Once intended primarily for the purpose of providing successors for the clergy,

The school system today performs the threefold function common to powerful churches throughout history. It is simultaneously the repository of society's myth, the institutionalization of that myth's contradictions, and the locus of the ritual which reproduces and veils the disparities between myth and reality.¹³

Thus the church has created an institution, the school, which has then gone on to a life of its own.

We have not only the medieval church to blame or

¹¹Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 221.

¹²Bishop, p. 1/44.

¹³Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1970, 1971), p. 37.

credit for this creation. At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries the Sunday School was invented. Say what its early proponents would about "democratizing influences," and bridging the gap between sacred and secular worlds, the Sunday School never really lived up to those values. Rather, "...it was an effective instrument of evangelical values and a useful means for inculcating agreed upon virtues," virtues usually expressed in middle-class terms.¹⁴ Sunday Schools became essential as higher education became secularized. No longer could Christian colleges in general be expected to indoctrinate students with the values common to American Protestantism. The Church had created an institution intended to provide conformity to its myths; it discovered that its offspring had developed into a haven for prophets and critics, only later itself to be mired into identification with the American Way of Life. Institutions habitually create reformers within their midst which eventually need reform themselves. But might this chain reach a

¹⁴Martin E. Marty, Righteous Empire (New York: Dial Press, 1970), p. 75.

point of diminishing or disappearing return?

In his discussion of the city, Lewis Mumford suggests the influence of religion in its development. Urban specialization, rationalization and regimentation all began in the sacred quarters of life in the temple.¹⁵ He sees the city as a "...special receptacle for storing and transmitting messages. At the beginning all its creative offices were tied to religion, and the most significant messages were sacred ones."¹⁶ As the city gained prominence, the monastery aided in transforming classic city into medieval city. The monastery itself was a new kind of polis. In it likeminded people cohabited permanently in order to live a Christian life devoted totally to the service of God.¹⁷ Thus the monastery furthered the growth of cities as collections of people brought together because of certain intense interdependence needs.

How man's relationship to nature is viewed is a theological question. Is man only a natural being? Is man subject only to natural process? Is there a separation be-

¹⁵ Lewis Mumford, The City in History (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), p. 106.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 246.

tween physical body and spiritual soul? Many of the Asian religions have much to teach Christians about the value of creation as a totality and about human solidarity. However, they also include a certain degree of passivity on the part of mankind in relation to the natural environment.¹⁸ If man is only subject to natural forces, B. F. Skinner and other behavior psychologists may be today's theologians of import. They would speak the definitive word on human motivation and values. This has not been the thrust of much of contemporary theological work. The human spirit, not nature and not technical society, is that which makes demands and keeps promises. Yet strangely enough to my thinking, it is rigid separation of body and soul that led to development of machine and technique. I refer here to Lewis Mumford:

In still another way did the institutions of the Church perhaps prepare the way for the machine: in their contempt for the body....The whole ritual of life in the old cultures tended to emphasize respect for ~~the~~ body and to dwell on its beauties and delights
.....¹⁹

¹⁸Douglas J. Elwood, "Primitivism or Technology: Must We Choose," Christian Century, LXXXVIII: 48 (December 1, 1971), 1414.

¹⁹Mumford, Technics and Civilization, p. 35.

The fact is, at all events, that the machine came most slowly into agriculture, with its life-conserving, life-maintaining functions, while it prospered lustily precisely in those parts of the environment where the body was most infamously treated by custom: namely, in the monastery, in the mine, on the battlefield.²⁰

I turn now to the problem of the creation of a Christian empire or state. The manner in which Western Christianity early became the bearer of the remnants of Roman civilization is easily understood. "The Roman Church...privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World-Empire, of which it is the actual continuation; the empire has not perished, but has only undergone a transformation."²¹

In the book Righteous Empire, Martin Marty develops his theme along the lines that the United States, both consciously and unconsciously, became a Protestant empire. He demonstrates convincingly that faith in God became synonymous with faith in their own virtues.²² The colonists in general had the self-perception of being God's chosen people and acted accordingly. Many of the early

²⁰Ibid., p. 36.

²¹Adolf Harnack, What is Christianity? (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), p. 270.

²²Marty, p. 9.

settlements and explorations were conducted by representatives of Roman Catholic Spain and France. However,

At the moment when thirteen colonies were beginning to form one nation and when eastern seaboarders began to move across the mountains into the west, Protestantism of English and what men then called Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic, or Caucasian stock set the terms for the religious dimensions of empire.²³

The Protestant leaders created the new empire, consolidated their positions in it, and established themselves as the custodians of the spiritual elements of nationhood. The empire developed to such an extent that Marty refers to the latter stage as Protestantdom.²⁴ Evangelical Christianity and the cultural construct became one and the same. Nineteenth century America is the era of nostalgia, the golden age of Protestantdom. In fact, the identification was so complete that attacking or defending American institutions was at the same time seen as attacking or defending the evangelical empire.²⁵ The Protestant empire, or Protestantdom, had become the political counterpart to the Kingdom of God. Once again a neg-

²³Ibid., p. 23.

²⁴Martin E. Marty, Second Chance for American Protestants (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 14.

²⁵Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 89.

ative cultural fact of the matter was that in speaking of Protestants we refer only to the white Protestants. White Protestants monopolized the development of values and mores in institutional and political life. Outsiders could see this clearly:

Frances Trollope, visiting just before 1831, grumbled that 'the absence of national religion' in the constitution had not kept people from developing a religious tyranny which was being exerted very effectually without the aid of the government. The mores²⁶ and the ethos could impose what laws never could do.

The question raised by Marty is whether, even under ideal or nearly ideal conditions, a placed religion or a Christian culture is desirable.

Can a Christian culture prevail? The first answer to be given is theological: Yes, of course it can. God in his freedom and grace can work surprises.²⁷

Will a Christian culture prevail? Almost as assuredly as we could answer theologically that it can, we must answer 'sociologically' that it will not. The present disposition of nations and powers does not admit the possibility....The Christian has a responsibility in, to, over, and around cultures which do not bear his name.²⁸

The question can be pushed one step further: Should a Christian culture prevail?...a critical rereading of

²⁶Ibid., p. 91

²⁷Ibid., p. 80

²⁸Ibid., p. 81

history might prompt us to ask whether we really would be so much better off if, in the modern world, a Christian culture could be refashioned.²⁹

Marty's answer is that our Bible and our theology necessarily point to a displaced Christianity, a Christianity that makes its presence felt in a particular society but is not identified with it. However, an anticultural bias can be equally destructive and irresponsible. Once again we end up with a dialectical understanding. "Whatever happens in the future, it would seem as if two factors should be present for some time to come. They are a Protestant deposit in the culture and a two-party approach to that deposit."³⁰

One might ask what it is about man that enables him to have dominion over the rest of the world, what is the quality that separates him from the rest of nature. Lewis Mumford points to the importance of the ability to dream. Apparently man has always been a dreaming animal. This ability to dream possibly enabled man to transcend normal animal nature.³¹ As we know from personal experience, dreams can be both frightening and instructive.

²⁹Ibid., p. 84.

³⁰Ibid., p. 264.

³¹Mumford, Myth of the Machine, p. 49.

"(Man's) first task was not to shape tools for controlling the environment, but to shape instruments even more powerful and compelling in order to control himself, above all his unconscious."³² Mumford goes on to argue for the place of dreams in breaking through to new insights. Man's wildest imaginings make possible the conception of truths beyond accepted knowledge. "Dragons and hippogriffs" led to the atom. Individual dreams become cultural dreams.

Every culture lives within its dream. That of Christianity was one in which a fabulous heavenly world.... shot its fantastically magnified shapes and images across the actual life of earthborn man....

By a slow natural process, the world of nature broke in upon the medieval dream of hell and paradise and eternity.³³

Many dreams of the fantastic can become reality in the form of conscious ideas and will. Consciousness is more than just a sum of its parts. It is the total configuration in any given individual which constitutes his perception of reality. Stated simplistically, when the individual ideas of a group of men begin to coalesce in an agreeable way, they begin to attain the status of public

³²Ibid., p. 51.

³³Mumford, Technics and Civilization, p. 28.

ideas, beliefs, and agreed upon truths. But ideas, whether private or public, cause nothing in themselves. Facts and ideas always interrelate. "Events are thus the result of our wishes and our notions, our wills and our brains, acting in conflict or cooperation with the physical world."³⁴

As ideas become public property some means of communication becomes essential. The use of symbolism and the development of language signals another step upward from man's animal state. Symbols point to shared meanings beyond the surface vocalizations or surface scribbles and pictures. They evoke feelings and transform meanings, helping men to realize their common ground and world view. Symbolism gets at the depth of life's meaning, often not understandable or communicable through any other media. Thus, Jordan Bishop can write in relation to the transmission of social values, that "...this was not done...through the instrumentality of the school. The rites of the Church, the symbolism of the liturgy,

³⁴Jacques Barzun, Darwin, Marx, Wagner (Garden City: Doubleday, 1941, 1958), p. 6.

were much more important than was formal teaching."³⁵

The Church and the clergy who occupy its pulpits assume the role of transformer of symbols. "A complex society is held together by certain assumptions and shared beliefs... The symbol-manipulators in the pulpits had to help their followers see purpose and meaning in a new way of life ..."³⁶ And our way of life is continually becoming new.

As symbols take on meaning in relation to the Unconditional, the ultimate, the religious, they create myths. Symbols express relatedness to the unconditionally real. The traditional idea of God in Christianity posits an ultimate and transcendent Creator. Whether this be center of faith or not, a center must exist, and only religion can provide a center for mankind.

A religion must have a generating center to motivate ethics, the fabrication of culture, theology....The religious undefined experience of the nation, elusive and aiming to combine and not to offend the particular religions, has no such center, no source.³⁷

In our nation's early growth the center was provided by Protestantism. Protestant symbolism and mythology were

³⁵Bishop, p. 1/14.

³⁶Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 148.

³⁷Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 68f.

recognizably present in all realms of life and society.

Several commonly held public images developed from religious symbol and myth. Yahweh as lord of history and time points to the mobile life of wanderers, to a displaced religion. Genesis tells us that man both can and should have dominion over the world, that he has a crucial role to play in the continuing creation. Nature is not a habitat of magical demons. These can be supported Biblically. But many other images can also be supported Biblically, even in the New Testament. Most of them relate to adaptation to the Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures from which Christianity arose. Other commonly held images include the identification of rural life with good life, the equation of work with value, and the confusion of cultural values with religious values. It is almost an inextricable kind of situation to attempt to rely on such common images.

Whether or not we allow that God himself has changed through the centuries, we cannot overlook the fact that man has undergone vast changes in his understandings of

the nature of God. Progress is not always on an even course upward. But generally speaking the concept of God has increasingly overcome its inadequacies as man matures. It is not an easy task nor a rapid one to rid theology of the past remnants of deficient God-concepts. We are burdened with theocratic and imperialistic God-language. The compost pile of traditions that constitutes our culture will not destroy old ideas, although it will gradually transform them and convert them into fertilizer. Thus we see that

Both Camus' atheism and Christian theism stem from a deficient doctrine of God, itself a remnant of the metaphysical era. They arise because of a concept of God that is not biblical but essentially Platonic or Aristotelian....In fact, an authentically biblical doctrine of God not only survives the view that man himself is the source of cultural meanings, but actually supports and encourages such a view.³⁸

"Back to the Bible" may not be as irrelevant an approach as many moderns so often think.

In attempting to reach understandings of man's place in culture Bible readers and scholars have studied

³⁸Cox, p. 73.

the documents of the Old and New Testaments for clues. As Christians one logical approach was to examine the nature of Jesus Christ. Last century's many studies of the historical life of Jesus culminated with Schweitzer's Quest for the Historical Jesus. It can be demonstrated in those quests that the determining factor in each resolution was more dependent on the particular author's theological and cultural biases than on actual textual evidence. Similar studies still occur, although the emphasis today tends to be more on Christology, the nature of Christ rather than the life of Jesus. The general feeling is that "We declare that the historical appearance of Jesus, in so far as it is drawn into the sphere of this attempt to establish probable truth, cannot be a basis of faith. It is only a part of that world with which faith is to wrestle."³⁹ Exegesis of the biblical writings and of the theological and historical writings of the church is necessary for a modern understanding of Christianity. I state further only that the important examination today

³⁹ Wilhelm Herrmann, The Communion of the Christian With God (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), p. 70.

is not into the historical Jesus but into the images of Christ and how the Church has used these images through the centuries.

Jesus' understanding of the law was strict in its insistence on proper motivation and rigid adherence to a love ethic. At the same time it was flexible in that no definite set of rules and regulations was prescribed. However, a definite social message was proclaimed. "... It is the proclamation of solidarity and brotherliness, in favour of the poor. But the message is bound up with the recognition of the infinite value of the human soul, and is contained in what Jesus said about the kingdom."⁴⁰ Jesus too was a product of his religious tradition through his culture. The kingdom of God in his view retained most of the then present various aspects, adding new dimensions, to be sure. "Eudemonistic expectations of mundane and political character were all that he discarded."⁴¹

The community of Christ was seen both as supra-sensible, coming from within, and as concretely shaped in

⁴⁰Harnack, p. 110.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 56f.

each community.⁴² The notion that the Gospel participates in all aspects of life through the Church easily led to viewing the Church as "...propagandist and agent of social transformation,"⁴³ and thus we have the Social Gospel movement at the turn of this century. The Social Gospel movement is generally considered to be an outgrowth of the Protestant evangelical tradition. A minority movement, it demonstrated that one segment, at least, of the Protestant majority was beginning the struggle with power and its uses in American society. Rosemary Radford Ruether states further that

The Social Gospel thus moved toward what today is called 'secular theology.' The old distinctions of sacred and secular, church and world were dissolved, and the Holy Spirit was seen at work not simply or even primarily in ecclesiastical institutions but in the struggle for humanity in society at large.⁴⁴

Related often to the Social Gospel movement was utopianism, to which we can trace many innovations of social design in contemporary society. Forming utopian communities can be an effective way to model experimental

⁴²Ibid., p. 194.

⁴³Rosemary Radford Ruether, The Radical Kingdom (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 90f.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 83.

life-styles; utopias are a sort of institutionalized conscientious objector to life-styles of the general culture. They can be futuristic and idealistic in being so, but they tend toward short life spans as reality overcomes ideals. They also tend to neglect the real value found in projecting alternatives and new possibilities and experimenting now with these alternatives.⁴⁵ What instead occurs is "...a powerful preference for the past. These (intentional communities) may be of value to the individuals in them, but the society as a whole would be better served by utopian experiments based on super- rather than pre-industrial forms."⁴⁶

The power of the future has been a fascinating force in human development. Future-consciousness can be traced back to the religious experience of Hebrew prophets and Christian apostles. The doctrine of the millennium emphasized the forces of history leading toward an ideal future. The post-millennial emphasis further suggested that "America was to be remade as part of the plan

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 13

⁴⁶Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 468.

anticipating Christ's Second Coming and the inauguration of a thousand years of justice and peace. To prepare for this, each man was to be holy and to work for an improved world."⁴⁷ A logical conclusion of this belief is that progress is possible and that it occurs as we move through history and work in the world. In fact, the doctrine of progress sees value in terms of movement through time.

This movement is not arbitrary:

For the Protestant spokesmen, this Progress was tied to some sort of idea of deity. To the emerging modernists, that deity could be either an impersonal force or some new transvaluation of the referred-to Being called Father by Jesus. To the moderates and the orthodox, Progress was the name for the way a personal God was pulling the nation. Providence allowed for a static view of history, with an accent--for some--on predestining power. Progress implied a dynamic view of history, full of development and change.⁴⁸

Ruether refers to a similar view when she discusses the "Great Master Plan." In this view, salvation is understood as a historical drama in which the natural evolutionary process has control. "This world historical process leads from an original good state and a fall or reversal

⁴⁷Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 93.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 188f.

of this state at the beginning of history through a long restorational and redemptive process that defines the rest of history to its final conclusion in the Kingdom of God."⁴⁹ As opposed to the apocalyptic view in which impotence and despair are operative, the evolutionary view sees good as present in principle, although not yet completed in process.⁵⁰ The historical realm is the expression of salvation.

Not all Christians saw their role as active participants in bringing about an ideal future. Since Christianity developed from Judaism, it is only expected that the emphasis on individual responsibility before God should lead to the Christian values of individual rights and separate selfhood. Democracy was a principal development from this understanding.⁵¹ However, the negative aspect of individual selfhood leads to a de-emphasis on social responsibility, the concern for persons and institutions surrounding the individual. Withdrawal from the world, as attempted by many "private Protestants," is

⁴⁹Ruether, p. 13.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 14.

⁵¹William Warren Sweet, American Culture and Religion (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1951), p. 36.

a deceptive action. Rather than enlisting on the side of social change, the privatists are participating in the status quo. Thus,

The program of 'private Protestantism' was more appealing to middle-class America, for it has tended more often to approve the given social order. And since most of the supporters of the white churches have come from such classes and tended to profit from identifying with the world as it was, disturbers of the peace like Rauschenbusch, Gladden, Herron, and other social Christians, have remained a minority.⁵²

Differing emphases in Protestantism can relate to any number of issues, but the competition between those who participate in the world through social action and those who participate in the world through withdrawal seems eternal.

The competitive practice secreted an ideology, God had, in this interpretation, always wanted churches to be fiercely independent of each other and under local control. Values from outside were screened out. Religious opinions surrounded the people's basic beliefs with such power that it was difficult for the prophetic note of judgment against society to emerge.⁵³

In individualistic religion, personal vices and individual reform received major attention to the neglect of the evils of society.⁵⁴ Every Protestant Christian can

⁵²Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 187.

⁵³Ibid., p. 74.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 64.

find Jesus for himself, and the only way to solve society's ills is to wait patiently while the Holy Spirit continues the process of individual salvation. Man is condemned because he is part of a world in the grip of demonic powers. Everything in the physical world is evil. In Rosemary Radford Ruether's terminology, the only hope for salvation is to travel inward to some realm beyond the system.⁵⁵ This kind of journey more often than not leads to separation from the present system as completely as possible. Apocalypticism developed as a pattern to bring hope and meaning in the midst of such a depressing world view. There will be a pure realm somewhere in the future beyond the present evil. Since there is no hope in present conditions, all hope is transferred to the future and all present action is considered futile. The driving force is the belief that the oppressor will be paid in full when the time comes--there will be "...a radical break, a cosmic intervention of God, an overthrow of evil powers."⁵⁶

Depending on an apocalyptic future disruption seems

⁵⁵Ruether, p. 10.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 6.

fruitless. Yet seeing progress as an evolutionary process leads easily to cultural blindness. Nevertheless we know that changes are made in society despite the difficulty faced. Often the Church has unwittingly given birth to those very forces which eventually transform it. Marty points to the abolitionists, "(Who) were often sons and daughters of conventional clergymen, who believed that they acted out the logic of their fathers' positions, even if they had to repudiate their fathers and their churches."⁵⁷ Sons question their fathers on the basis of their fathers' own value systems. This must involve more than surface scratching and questioning of the principles governing everyday life. It must mean questioning the very ground supporting a particular cultural system. For the Christian, reformation is understood as a response to the movement of the Holy Spirit and involves all of the depths of life.

Too often the Holy Spirit is ignored or not allowed free rein. "The images of man found in any given age

⁵⁷Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 119.

both reflect the realities of the human condition in that age and also shape the age's visions of what might be."⁵⁸ But the images of man become boxed in and stagnant when dreams are cut off and freedom diminished. Majority rule or consensus religion is not the answer.

...Alexis de Tocqueville, remarked that 'the majority draws a formidable circle around thought. Within its limits, one is free: but woe to him who dares to break out of it.' Religion, he saw,⁵⁹ was a major element in the formation of this circle.

Into the midst of this theology/culture struggle stepped Karl Barth with his concept of a God who does not need man to exist. God's self-sufficiency in turn means that He can leave man alone to live as he wills.

Vis-a-vis society, crisis theology assumed a double possibility. On the one hand it could counsel a detachment of the Gospel from the world, a rigid separation of revelation from culture that would seem to suggest an irrelevancy of the church to society, at least as far as the aspirations of society were concerned. But on the other hand, the dissolution of the ties between the church and culture might also suggest a prophetic relevancy of the church to society of the type that had been lost in the amalgamation of the church into the social currency since the time of Constantine.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Gerald W. McFarland, "Inside Reform: Status and Other Evil Motives," Soundings, LIV: 2 (Summer 1971), 173

⁵⁹Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 90.

⁶⁰Ruether, pp. 115f.

Crisis theology, through its reassertion of the radical transcendence of God and the incapacity of man to save himself through his own powers, thereby recovered an independent basis for revelation, apart from current culture, including the religious currency of the church.⁶¹

A number of other influential thinkers have outlined ways that they see Church operating in culture. Although they arrive at different solutions, the solutions are similar in that the Church is seen to be a mold of public life. Gunnar Myrdal has demonstrated the dominance of religion as a force for "...stability and conservatism in society. He says, in fact, that he knows of no instance in South Asia in which religion has induced social change."⁶² Here the influence is seen as anti-change.

Peter Berger credits Christian Biblical tradition for the development of today's secularized world. However, this development is seen to bring disaster to its originators. "...Historically speaking, Christianity has been its own gravedigger."⁶³ Harvey Cox describes the view of Von Oppen:

⁶¹Ibid., p. 116.

⁶²Elwood, p. 1415.

⁶³Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 127.

Von Oppen believes the organization principle entered Western history with the Christian Gospel. The Gospel posed a demand for personal decision...new community of the church made a decisive break with all preceding traditional orders. It radically relativized national and racial groupings...community based on free choice....first Christians shared a life that violated previous religious and racial taboos...lived not to cherish a sacred tradition but to prepare for an imminent future.⁶⁴

I like to think that "Faith precedes culture, it does not follow. Culture is the fruit of faith, not the foundation of it. Christians in the past related themselves, often creatively, to the cultural possibilities of their day."⁶⁵ This is the conviction of Christianity, and probably of most other religions as well. The entire milieu should be affected by Christian presence. There may be a problem with the pluralism of the modern world and the existence of other religious faiths. It still remains possible and necessary to be aggressive evangelists without being closed to the values found in other beliefs and myth-systems. Manifest Destiny is an archaic and unfortunate notion, but Christian presence is of the utmost

⁶⁴Cox, p. 177.

⁶⁵Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 41.

importance in society. Thus,

The following characteristics should emerge in a culture where the Christian witness has been effective:

1. A pattern of life in which the cause of human freedom has been advanced.
2. Institutions which release the human spirit and support human fulfillment.
3. An improved capacity to distribute equitably the products of technological achievement, while not subjugating the individual to collectivization of life.
4. Improved ability to use things to enrich the human spirit.
5. A reawakened awareness of God's immanence in human affairs.⁶⁶

Nothing in that says that everyone must become Christian.

Rather, the Christian presence must be experienced and expressed.

Let us examine for a moment the idea of some kind of religious absolute, absolute in its chronological priority. In seeking a religious understanding of life, it is not just the Christian theologian who argues for the existence of a religious a priori. For example, in his discussion of Zen Buddhism D. T. Suzuki argues that faith is not based on cultural particularities and says, "This I believe is the position taken up by progressive modern

⁶⁶Richard N. Bender, Called to be Relevant (Nashville: Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1964), pp. 151f.

Christians."⁶⁷ I have already referred to Karl Barth's belief in the necessity to begin with revelation as "... the source and basis of man's knowledge of and relation to God."⁶⁸

In Ritschl's statement of the human situation, "...ethical reason (impresses) on human nature itself the internal law of the conscience...."⁶⁹ Schleiermacher's term was "unconditional dependence."⁷⁰ Whatever the designated concept, the meaning was essentially that as a part of man's mental nature, there is a given element from which religion necessarily springs. Troeltsch too shared this idea.

His main problem dealt with the meaning of religion in the context of the human spirit of man's mental structure. Here Troeltsch followed Kant by accepting his three critiques, but he said that there is not only the theoretical a priori..., not only the moral..., and not only the aesthetic..., but there is also a religious a priori. This means that there is something which belongs to the structure of the mind itself from which religion arises.⁷¹

Philosophers have agreed in one way or another with similar concepts throughout the centuries of specula-

⁶⁷D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism (Garden City: Doubleday, 1956), p. 33.

⁶⁸Ruether, p. 113.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 231.

⁶⁹H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), pp. 95f.

⁷⁰Paul Tillich, Perspective on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 97.

tion. Universal reason, logos, intuitive reason--basically it is assumed "...that the human mind has power to intuit essences."⁷² There is an order to the world and part of that order is man's innate ability to discover the order. In discovering this order man engages in a process of self-interpretation that must be judged both by logic and by the meaning of existence as a whole.⁷³

I am not personally fond of theological formulations that insist only on the priority of a religious absolute. As a conception that will aid in understanding what Christianity can bring to the secular world, a formulation such as Karl Barth's has much merit. However, I remain unconvinced of the possibility that Barth could have reached such a theological understanding without the acquirements of his particular cultural background. I do not know a God who is removed from the scene of my existence. Nor do I see a theology that can stand alone. Theology must approach the world with assurance, but also with openness, humility and flexibility. The discipline

⁷²Ibid., p. 32.

⁷³Ibid., p. 118.

of theological questioning brings longer-lasting results than does an assured answer. I am convinced that ideas, theological or otherwise, do have powerful consequences in terms of actions, but only when they are directly related to the life interests of those who hear and hold them. In answer to the question: What effect does theology have on culture? I am struck by the reference Kenneth Cauthen makes to Crane Brinton:

Do ideas and ideals have the power to alter the course of history? Crane Brinton reminds us that among the stock of ideas developed in the modern world is 'the idea that ideas are powerless to influence human actions.'⁷⁴

⁷⁴Kenneth Cauthen, Christian Biopolitics (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 55f.

CHAPTER IV

THREE APPROACHES TO THE INTERRELATIONSHIP

A. Jacques Ellul and the Meaning of the City

In The Meaning of the City Jacques Ellul proceeds by looking at each biblical instance that mentions the city. For him the Scriptures are authoritative in their entirety, but this authority does not necessarily relate to Historie. Rather, Geschichte is the important aspect-- "the Word somehow became flesh."¹ Ellul is unconcerned with demythologizing, his position being that myth is the addition of theological significance and should be treated with reverence.

Ellul begins his examination of biblical cities with the Cain and Abel story and then works his way through the Old and New Testaments in sequence. Cain kills Abel in a story that demonstrates the relationships between the city and the country. Cain is sent wandering.

¹John Wilkinson, "Introduction," in Jacques Ellul, The Meaning of the City (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. vii.

In his thirst for eternity, rest and security, he builds a city. Thus the city becomes a homeland, a material sign for security, an initiation of a new world.

We are then led through the stories of cities and city-builders: Nimrod follows on the curse of Ham; Babel wants to make a name for herself. The nation Israel did not build cities except in slavery until the time of Solomon, the first builder-king. Then we see the relationship between the city and false gods. Rehoboam built cities to become powerful, after which he rejected Yahweh.

Throughout the Old Testament Ellul sees the city as man's attempt to create security and power without the help of God. It is man's greatest creation but also his biggest downfall. Thus, the city becomes the symbol for power, terror, vigilance, might, conquest, idolatry, war, perversion. It is a sign of the world's attitude toward God--we do not need Him. It is basically an evil construct in that the city can be neutralized but it cannot be made good. Particularly in the stories of Sodom and

Nineveh, group accountability enter the picture, and we see that the accepted view of what is necessary for salvation is separation from the city.

Nevertheless, it is in these cities that we must live and our welfare depends on the city. God's love for His Creation may save the city. Meanwhile our message to the city is one of both anxiety and hope. We still need to leave the city, but only after its fall. In fact, the city may even become a temporary instrument of God, as in the cities of refuge.

Babylon was the type for the city as basically evil. But now Jerusalem becomes the important type. Jerusalem is holy because of David's decision to locate here the Temple and the Ark. God reluctantly agreed to this and "adopted" Jerusalem. In this action God becomes a builder and Jerusalem becomes a witness city with God possessing all cities through Jerusalem. Because of her holiness, Jerusalem's sin is greater than the sins of other cities, yet at the same time Jerusalem makes other

cities righteous by her witness.

Jerusalem is not good in herself, but only in her assignment to await the coming of the Messiah. The negative view of cities continues with Jesus. He too curses cities, he too had no home. Jesus brings the multitude out of the city. The crowds came to Jesus as their goal. Thus, Jerusalem's role as sacred disappears and at Jesus' death Jerusalem becomes Babylon.

Jacques Ellul sees the city as Man's greatest work, but it is also parasitic and evil. However, rather than history's moving away from the city and toward a "heaven," a backward step in his thinking, the progression is toward a heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. This New Jerusalem will differ from man's cities first because it will be created by God and second because it will crown as well as end history.

Ellul turns to history and sociology as he writes The Technological Society. This book continues with his concern about the meaning of the city. The city is the

focus and locus of technology. Technology is man's great achievement and also man's attempt to grasp power and security. But the major step taken in the second book seems to be that technology is now driving man instead of the reverse. There is an inevitability factor that enters the picture. Autonomous technology takes over the traditional values of every society, producing a monolithic world culture.²

Technique transforms ends into means. What was once prized in its own right now becomes worthwhile only if it helps achieve something else. And, conversely, technique turns means into ends. 'Know-how' takes on an ultimate value.³

Ellul sees five main factors in the technical revolution: 1) collective incubation; 2) close link between population and technique; 3) economic structure that was both stable and flexible; 4) plasticity of the social milieu; and 5) industrial self-interest. Each of these factors was caused or magnified by the city.

He also sees a number of characteristics of technique. Technique is rational and at the same time

²John Wilkinson, "Translator's Introduction," in Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. x.

³Ibid., p. vi.

artificial. Technical automatism allows that technique can be opposed only by other technique. It is self-augmenting in that technical progress is irreversible. Technique is monistic in that everything hangs together. Finally, techniques have taken over the whole of civilization and have become autonomous. Ellul then uses the remainder of the book to examine technique as it functions in various aspects of society.

Jacques Ellul admits with pride that he is uninterested in the kind of biblical criticism that examines sitz im leben and intention of specific passages. He is interested in the way in which passages are presently interpreted or have generally been interpreted throughout church history. The preferable approach would seem to be to begin at the earliest stages and dig out the meanings and intentions, but Ellul insists that this is unnecessary for the theologian and tends to split his vision. In any case, Ellul does seem consistent in his treatment of the biblical literature. Thinking along the lines of H.

Richard Niebuhr's typology in Christ and Culture, it appears that Ellul most closely fits the Christ-against-culture type. For him the inevitability of the process of world history is evil, although man need not be evil in his individual actions. Different rules and orders operate in the city and in the Kingdom of God.

Ellul does not prescribe actions for the church or for individuals to take in response to the secular city. After all, he maintains that the city itself exists as a result of man's attempt to find security without God. Thus by Ellul's very definition of city we see that man's work in it cannot change things; man will never use the city for good.⁴ Attempts to grasp technology and create a more nearly perfect world fail because of man's usurping God's role in history. Besides, technology is now running away with mankind. For example, the state of the science of genetics was such that if Watson and Crick had not discovered the make-up of DNA someone else most surely would have done so, probably within months of their

⁴Ellul, Meaning of the City, p. 168.

discovery. Individual actions are swallowed up by the society.

Ellul's solution to the problem is left in God's hands. From Eden to the present man has sought perfection. He must now wait for God to make perfect what man cannot. The New Jerusalem is coming and it will be a complete break with history, an apocalyptic occurrence. The main task for the Church is to await the coming of the New Jerusalem and to witness to the transcendent presence of God. In himself no man is worthy of the New Jerusalem, but in Christ God adopts man's world and in Christ man is made worthy.

Despite his deterministic approach, Ellul says there is more to our response to the city. One of the basic themes he sees in the Old and New Testaments is the need to separate oneself from the city. He grants the impossibility of getting away from urban culture which pervades the whole world. Instead of separating oneself physically, what one can and must do is separate oneself

from the value systems of the dominant culture. The Christian must witness to the values of Christ as a sort of deviant within general culture.

Further, the Christian is not let off the hook in terms of action. The place to be is in the midst of the action, maybe even being the best possible technician in order to steer technology into more proper pathways. Yet in doing this one must continually remind himself that he is not going to make things perfect. The Kingdom of God or the New Jerusalem will come through the efforts of God, not through his. This need to act as if one's life depends on it--and it does--but not take oneself seriously may be what it means today to bear the cross of Christ.

Ellul likens himself to a physician

who must diagnose a disease and guess its probable course, but who recognizes that God may work a miracle, that the patient may have an unexpected constitutional reaction, or that the patient--suffering from tuberculosis--may die unexpectedly of a heart attack.⁵

The patient will certainly die if nothing is done to stop

⁵Ellul, Technological Society, p. xxxi.

the progress of the disease. But there is some small hope with Ellul in that he agrees man can change the course of civilization in some respects despite the unlikelihood of that occurrence. Determinants become inevitabilities if each of us abdicates his responsibilities with regard to values of Christian existence.⁶

The Meaning of the City and The Technological Society are only two of several books that Ellul has authored in which he attempts to speak to contemporary culture through his understanding of a continuous reading of the Bible. In Violence⁷ he discusses the total inconsistency of Christian participation in violent actions, for whatever reasons. Especially in modern society the notion of a just war is a contradiction in terms. Early Christians understood this in "...their desire to go beyond the simple local community and extend it to embrace all men...."⁸ Christianity calls for pacifism, a pacifism that is total and not a nonviolence that is political or propagandistic. There is no Christian solution to

⁶Ibid., p. xxix.

⁷Jacques Ellul, Violence (New York: Seabury Press 1969).

⁸Ibid., p. 10.

organize society or the world.

They forget that this is the world that has absolutely rejected Jesus Christ; that there can be no accord between the values, the bases, the stolkeia of the world and those of the revelation...it is a mistake--an enormous mistake--to suppose that the Incarnation and Lordship of Jesus Christ have resolved the problem. If the Incarnation has a meaning it can only be that God came into the most abominable of places (and he did not,⁹ by his coming, either validate or change that place).

Ellul is distressed by the band-wagon approach that Christianity seems to have toward the trends in society. Not only do Christians tend to join in concern for problems only after others in society point to the problems, but they also tend to conform to the general view of things, bringing little that is unique. Ellul discusses at length the place in the Gospel of concern for the poor. This leads to a presentation of various economic solutions and a discussion of power relationships. The danger is that Christians tend to become enraptured by a particular sociological solution, thinking that it can be justified theologically. In dealing with power con-

⁹Ibid., p. 25.

cepts, violence seems inevitable.

Christians who approve of violence do so out of one of three different conceptions of Christianity. For one group, Christianity is a revolutionary force; for a second group, there is a theology of revolution (man-made); for a third, Christianity has been fused into the revolution, which has become a value in itself.¹⁰

But Christian action must always be specifically and decisively Christian and not identified with particular political or economic movements. "Radical application of the word of God" is the only way to avoid violent and revolutionizing heresies.¹¹

Violence can only bring limited results. It does not get at the root of skewed power relationships. Christians are fooling themselves if they think they can justify their participation in violent acts. Ellul maintains that every Christian who has shared in movements has done so because of his involvement with the dominant ideology of his society.¹² We must enlist on the side of the poor, but the resort to violence is a concession of inadequacy. We are incapable of seeing and solving the funda-

¹⁰Ibid., p. 43.

¹¹Ibid., p. 47.

¹²Ibid., p. 66.

mental questions of our time. The Christian task is not to participate in a justificatory role, but to interpret for society the meaning of acts and events. Violence "must deny the Father who loves all men equally."¹³

Ellul insists on a Christian realism that 1) sees the facts as they are, 2) knows clearly what one is doing, and 3) recognizes that violence is to be found everywhere and at all times. Violence simply exists as does digestion and gravity. He presents five laws of violence.

1) "Once you start using violence, you cannot get away from it...."¹⁴ 2) Violence is reciprocal. 3) All violence is the same in that "...it is impossible to distinguish between justified and unjustified violence, between violence that liberates and violence that enslaves."¹⁵ 4) Violence begets violence and nothing else. 5) "...The man who uses violence always tries to justify both it and himself."¹⁶

In Ellul's terms, violence is of the order of necessity, and his five laws of violence describe how he

¹³Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 103.

sees that order work. The order of necessity is the order of separation from God. If Christians participate in that order, even on behalf of the poor and oppressed, they too separate themselves from God. "But when God reveals himself necessity ceases to be destiny or even inevitability."¹⁷ The role and ability of a Christian in society is to shatter those fatalities and necessities.

We cannot avoid participating in violent movements especially if we as Christians truly are on the side of the poor. We cannot ask anyone else to submit to injustice nonviolently. But when we participate in such movements we do so as aliens, standing over against the violence with our order of love. Violence is of the order of necessity. Therefore, in practical terms, Christians cannot nor should they try to avoid it. What Christians must not do is justify the violence. We are to carry out our lonely witness of love and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. "If violence is unleashed anywhere at all, the Christians are always to blame."¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 156.

Ellul bases his discussion in The Politics of God and the Politics of Man¹⁹ on commentary on II Kings, which he says is the most political of all the books in the Bible. The very title of this book is the clue for its main point: God's rule and man's rule are of two different orders. Man acts out of his own reason and only in retrospect can we see how that action can be interpreted in relation to God's word. The prophet is not an actor. Rather, he speaks into the situation. Man gets himself into trouble when he acts with the understanding that his actions are God's will.

The man of God, the true prophet, is not concerned about success in terms of efficacy. Success for the Christian can come only in a relationship with God in faith. This means that there should be no thought of attempting to change the world significantly through our actions. We must act as a beacon and interpreter, speak the truth in faith and damn the consequences. The center of Ellul's thought, and the center of the book, might be

¹⁹Jacques Ellul, The Politics of God and the Politics of Man (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

summed up in these two brief passages from the latter pages:

There is a divine law, which is a commandment, and which is addressed to us. Hence we have to fulfill it to the letter. We have to do all that is commanded. The sense or conviction of the utter futility²⁰ of the work we do must not prevent us from doing it.

To do a gratuitous, ineffective, and useless act is²¹ the first sign of our freedom and perhaps the last.

False Presence of the Kingdom²² is yet another version of Jacques Ellul's basic position. The Church is equivalent to mission, but mission cannot be understood in political, sociological or historical terms. Jesus Christ as Lord of History must mean something else, for history as we know it will end in judgment. The Christian is neither sent into the world to justify it, nor can he automatically take the opposite point of view. We are damned if we perform the same works as all the world, but we are also damned if we do nothing. Two main dangers that we must avoid as Christians are abstraction and putting ourselves in the place of God. What then can and must the

²⁰Ibid., p. 195.

²¹Ibid., p. 198.

²²Jacques Ellul, False Presence of the Kingdom (New York: Seabury Press, 1972).

Christian do?

...today, it is far more important that the Church recover her sense of identity as the body of Christ, and that she draw the necessary conclusions from that fact, than that she should issue statements without weight or significance, statements which are in no sense a presence of the Kingdom...²³

This means that prayer becomes much more important than any kind of speech can be.

Jesus recognized the existence of power but he was indifferent to it, and this must be our position. Power will only corrupt and betray. Rather than conforming to the world and acting in a justificatory manner, the Church acts as prophet and spiritual judge.

The sole duty of the Church (in politics as well as in all else) is to take her stand in relation to the question: 'When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?'...The Church's stance in politics (hence that of each Christian) should be specific and unique, not commensurate with the attitudes of the 'pagans.'²⁵

The world and the power structures within it are of the order of necessity. The Church must participate vigorously, but in its own special way. Its participation

²³Ibid., p. 93.

²⁴Ibid., p. 165.

²⁵Ibid., p. 177.

must be that of reconciliation and witness to the value of relationship with God. It says a resounding "no" to the ways of the world. Without the presence of the Church to preserve openings in the world, the world will remain a closed system.

Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes²⁶ is a fascinating sociological and political study, but it adds little for my purposes here. Again the thesis has to do with the inescapable necessity of propaganda for everyone. Since propaganda works best when man is alone in a mass, and when man's actions can be separated from his thought, once more we see that the need for a truth-sayer or prophet exists.

The only true serious attitude--serious because the danger of man's destruction by propaganda is serious, serious because no other attitude is truly responsive and serious--is to show people the extreme effectiveness of the weapon used against them, to rouse them to defend themselves by making them aware of their frailty and their vulnerability, instead of soothing them with the worst illusion, that of a security that neither man's nature nor the techniques of propaganda permit him to possess.²⁷

²⁶Jacques Ellul, Propaganda (New York: Random House, 1973).

²⁷Ibid., p. 257.

Ellul's approach leaves man with little choice for action. The city is cursed and man with it, but it is in these cities that man must live. Yet Ellul insists that his view is not fatalistic or deterministic. His message is that man must separate himself psychologically and spiritually from the city. Man must act; in fact, it is noble for man to attempt to become the best technologist possible and fight technology with better technology. In doing so, man cannot take himself too seriously. Man's actions are important to himself personally, and can even make limited changes in the course of the world for the better. However, in the final disposition, man's action is insignificant and God will bring in the New Jerusalem in his own time.

B. Whitehead and the Possibility for Novelty

A second possible solution to the interrelation of theology to culture comes from Alfred North Whitehead and the process theism that developed from his philosophy.

Intuitively, predestinarian and deterministic views have never made sense in their usual definitions. Yet as cultural relativity is doubtlessly real, one is left with the difficult problem of deciding where relativity and determinism stop and begin. Whitehead's doctrine of God seems to help in strengthening my consciousness of Christian identity.

Actual Entities "...are the final real things of which the world is made up."²⁸ Sometimes termed "actual occasions," they are the final facts, "...drops of experience, complex and interdependent."²⁹ These atomic actual entities are microcosms of the realities that we experience in everyday life, as they aggregate into "societies" or "nexūs." As such, actual entities are units of process rather than inert bits of material. For Whitehead there is nothing real beyond actual entities. In the words of Donald W. Sherburne,

An actual entity is 'the unity to be ascribed to a particular instance of concrescence.' A concrescence is a growing together of the remnants of the perishing

²⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 23.

²⁹ Ibid.

past into the vibrant immediacy of a novel, present unity. An actual entity endures but an instant--the instant of its becoming, its active process of self-creation out of the elements of the perishing past--and then it, too, perishes and as objectively immortal becomes dead datum for succeeding generation of actual entities.³⁰

As that instantaneous particle of reality, the actual entity is not unrelated to its surrounding entities. Interdependence is the only way to understand every entity. Thus each entity has its own individuality but at the same time it cannot be abstracted from the universe.³¹ The interrelationships with its surroundings are, in fact, what gives each actual entity its individuality, each actual entity arising out of its own actual world.³²

Actual entities acquire their identity through "prehensions," or "vectors" that "feel what is there and transform it into what is here."³³ Sherburne says simply that "...the actual entity is the sum of its prehensions."³⁴ The nature of prehensions is as follows:

Every prehension consists of three factors: (a) the 'subject' which is prehending, namely, the actual entity in which that prehension is a concrete element;

³⁰Donald W. Sherburne, A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 206.

³¹Alfred North Whitehead, Science and Philosophy (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 118.

³²Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 334.

³³Ibid., p. 133.

³⁴Sherburne, p. 10.

(b) the 'datum' which is prehended; (c) the 'subjective form' which is how that subject prehends that datum.³⁵

A prehension can involve data from actual entities, data from eternal objects, or mixtures; it can be positive (inclusive) or negative (exclusive).

The decision whether a prehension be positive or negative is a value question, as each actual entity has a self-interest.³⁶ But looking for reasons that lead to a particular actual entity goes no further than the constitution of the actual entity itself. "These 'reasons' are the other actual entities objectified for it."³⁷

"The notion of causation arose because mankind lives amid experiences in the mode of causal efficacy,"³⁸ says Whitehead. In other words, things happen apparently because of directly related preceding happenings. But Whitehead wishes to distinguish between efficient causation and final causation. The initial phase of concrescence is the phase of efficient causation and the supplemental phases of concrescence are phases of novelty.

³⁵Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 35.

³⁶Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making (Cleveland: World, 1926), p. 97.

³⁷Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 248.

³⁸Ibid., p. 204.

These phases occur along a sort of continuum of consciousness ranging from inanimate material objects to the more sophisticated aggregates of entities, such as man. Thus, says Whitehead:

The doctrine of the philosophy of organism is that, however far the sphere of efficient causation be pushed in the determination of these components of a concrescence...beyond the determination of these components there always remains the final reaction of the self-creative unity of the universe. This final reaction completes the self-creative act by putting the decisive stamp of creative emphasis upon the determinations of efficient cause. Each occasion exhibits its measure of creative emphasis in proportion to its measure of subjective intensity....³⁹

The final analysis is that all actual entities have the characteristic of self-causation. "For this reason every actual entity also shares with God the characteristic of transcending all other actual entities, including God. The universe is thus a creative advance into novelty."⁴⁰

Self-causation, however, does not mean that the environment in which an actual entity is located has no effect on its identity. Each organism depends on the character of its environment.⁴¹ But the actual entity

³⁹Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 260.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 131.

orders its own systematic environment, housing its actual world. In this way, the reasons for an actual entity constitute that entity.

This refers to the effect of history on an actual entity, as it is impossible for contemporary events to be in causal relationship with each other.⁴² Obviously, history, both recent and past, is important to the present but knowledge of the past is useful only insofar as it equips us for the present.⁴³ Each actual entity is present instantaneously and can remain present only in the mind, not in nature.⁴⁴ Once again, men's environment and history affect but do not determine his future. The possibility for novelty is present.

God, too, is an actual entity and as such becomes a part of the prehended data for a given actual entity. God has an ideal aim for each actual entity, but that entity's prehension can be either positive or negative. Although God provides a specific purpose for every entity, that ideal aim is only a possibility and not a specific

⁴²Bernard M. Loomer, "Ely on Whitehead's God," in Delwin Brown, Ralph E. James, Jr., and Gene Reeves (eds.) Process Philosophy and Christian Thought (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), pp. 264f.

⁴³Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims of Education (New York: New American Library, 1929, 1949), p. 14.

⁴⁴Alfred North Whitehead, The Concept of Nature (Cambridge: University Press, 1920), p. 68.

reality. The "lure" of God, persuasive though it be, can be resisted. However, the actual entity cannot ignore God's "lure."

Whitehead's approach can be typified when he says: "I do not think in words. I begin with concepts, then try to put them into words, which is often very difficult."⁴⁵ For this reason I include the following lengthy definitions:

Eternal Object: Any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world is called an 'eternal object.' Eternal objects are forms of definiteness capable of specifying the character of actual entities; they are 'Pure Potentials for the Specific Determination of Fact.' An actual entity's process of becoming is a process of acquiring definiteness by a series of decisions to select or reject various forms of definiteness (eternal objects)... 'an eternal object is always a potentiality for actual entities; but in itself, as conceptually felt, it is neutral as to the fact of its physical ingression in any particular actual entity of the temporal world.'⁴⁶

Proposition: A proposition is a hybrid sort of entity in which an eternal object, simple or complex, is fused with an actual entity, or nexus of actual entities....The concrete definiteness of the actualities is eliminated from--they retain the indicative

⁴⁵Lucien Price, Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954), p. 150.

⁴⁶Sherburne, pp. 220f.

function of pointing out a particular location, but the eternal objects that in fact characterized them are eliminated so that, in the proposition, they are reduced to bare its, bare possibilities for accepting any assigned predictive pattern. As such bare its they are referred to as the logical subjects of the proposition.

...A proposition is also in itself indeterminate as to its own realization in propositional feelings. It is a datum for feeling that awaits a subject to feel it, and its function in the world is to act as a lure for feeling.⁴⁷

I do not wish to examine in more detail all the elements that constitute Whitehead's doctrine of God. Rather, I wish to look more specifically at the way in which God contributes to the creative process. God for Whitehead is not transcendent in the sense of being outside the realm of metaphysical principles. God is an actual entity and as such has all the attributes of actual entities except one, namely, that God is non-temporal, the only non-temporal actual entity. "The definite determination which imposes ordered balance on the world requires an actual entity imposing its own unchanged consistency of character on every phase,"⁴⁸ and that non-

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 239f.

⁴⁸Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 92.

temporal entity is God. The one way in which God transcends the temporal world is that "...He is an actual fact in the nature of things."⁴⁹

The two poles of God according to Whitehead are the primordial and the consequent. "Viewed as primordial, he is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality."⁵⁰ God's feelings lack the fullness of actuality and are devoid of consciousness in their subjective forms.

He is the unconditioned actuality of conceptual feeling at the base of things; so that, by reason of this primordial actuality, there is an order in the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation. His unity of conceptual operations is a free creative act, untrammelled⁵¹ by reference to any particular course of things.

God provides the initial phase of each subjective aim and "...he is the principle of concretion--the principle by which there is initiated a definite outcome from a situation otherwise riddled with ambiguity."⁵² The conceptual nature of God is complete and thus remains unchanged.

However, the consequent nature of God is ever-

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 150.

⁵⁰Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 405.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 405.

⁵²Ibid., p. 406.

changing. God and the world affect each other; in a real way they create each other. Or, "...each temporal occasion embodies God, and is embodied in God."⁵³ The temporal world "passes into the immediacy of his own life,"⁵⁴ and in this way the world is saved and becomes "everlasting." In a sense God becomes both means and end, absolute and relative.

To be an actual entity is to have value. God's purpose is to attain value in the temporal world.⁵⁵ This particular value has to do with God's consistency and ordering, order being a necessary element in the world.⁵⁶ The aesthetic order of the actual world is derived from God. God, "the completed ideal harmony," is necessary for actuality to be achieved from the infinite freedom and infinite possibilities that are present.

God presents each actual entity with an urge toward the future. He also is the principle of concretion, that actual entity that begins self-causation. Thus, "God and the actual world jointly constitute the character of

⁵³Ibid., p. 410.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 408.

⁵⁵Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 97.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 101.

the creativity for the initial phase of the novel concrescence."⁵⁷ Each occasion receives an initial aim from God (the primordial nature), the aim differing for the particular occasion. But this aim, although initiating the move, does not determine it. God as an actual entity is prehended in just the same manner as other prehended data. Once again, although the initial aim cannot be ignored, the actual entity may deal with it in many ways. The strength of God's lure is powerful but not decisive.

Whitehead writes that,

The universe includes a threefold creative act composed of (i) the one infinite conceptual realization, (ii) the multiple solidarity of free physical realizations in the temporal world, (iii) the ultimate unity of the multiplicity of⁵⁸ actual fact with the primordial conceptual fact.

Looking further at the nature of creativity, Whitehead refers to the old doctrine "no one crosses the same river twice."⁵⁹ The history of mankind is a continual passage into the future unknown, and novelty is the norm for man's becoming. The passage of novelty is born

⁵⁷Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 286.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 408.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 34.

as each new instance of novelty occurs. Creativity is found in the transition between one actual occasion and the birth of a new instance of experienced value.⁶⁰

Novelty begins conceptually from God and apart from Him it cannot occur.⁶¹ "Creatures," "creativity" and "God" are all tied together. "...There is no meaning to 'creativity' apart from its 'creatures,' and no meaning to 'God' apart from the creativity and the 'temporal creatures,' and no meaning to the temporal creatures apart from 'creativity' and 'God.'"⁶² Through God as the principle of concretion, novelty is produced. Whitehead's famous phrase for this is "The many become one and are increased by one."

Although we must conform to what is past, we can more or less do what we will with God's lure. Thus our responses to God can be inclusive or exclusive; our prehensions of God as data can be positive or negative. Both responses are equally a part of the process of creativity.⁶³ The choice belongs to the actual entity in

⁶⁰Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 109.

⁶¹Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 190.

⁶²Ibid., p. 263.

⁶³Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 109.

question and thus each event is a totally unique occurrence.

God and the world are not in opposition to each other in the usual sense, although there is a certain antithesis between them. Whitehead says, "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order."⁶⁴ Thus the permanence of God and the flux of the world are essential to each other. In another place, Whitehead writes, "Freedom, givenness, potentiality, are notions which presuppose each other and limit each other."⁶⁵ As these notions interact, creativity occurs, so that "...experience involves a becoming, that becoming means that something becomes, and that what becomes involves repetition transformed into novel immediacy."⁶⁶

How does Whitehead help overcome the difficulties posed in the first part of this paper? First, man's choice is real. God presents us in each occasion with an initial aim, a lure. That is all it is, though it be certainly persuasive. How man responds to that lure is

⁶⁴Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 399.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 155.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 159..

undetermined. The relative importance of God's role and man's role may vary considerably in a given occasion, but God cannot be ignored. Whitehead says that all of nature seeks order. The perfect will of God can be understood as the best possible ordering of experience. Man is continually making choices that attempt to bring oneness out of the many. He may not do the best possible, but he is able to know what the aim is for him in each occasion.

Second, man's action has meaning. The primordial pole of God provides the ordering, the initial aim, the principle of concretion. However, the consequent pole of God is affected by the actions of nature and especially by the actions of man. God incorporates the actions of mankind into his very being, and brings value to those actions. Forgiveness does not involve taking away any consequences of man's action--the effects on others and on God remain. God does ensure that the possibilities for good remain present despite what evils may have occurred. God does not create the world as we traditionally under-

stand creation, but he saves the world and makes it everlasting.

Hope can be based upon components of process itself: 1) the generally available vision of God; 2) the openness of the future; 3) the everlastingness of the past in the memory of God; 4) freedom to create novel experience at all levels of the cosmic process; 5) aesthetic enjoyment of existence, and 6) the possibility of a better society through intelligent use of the first five elements.⁶⁷

C. Wolfhart Pannenberg and the Power of the Future

This paper does not treat Wolfhart Pannenberg in depth, but Theology and the Kingdom of God⁶⁸ is a helpful addition to my considerations of Ellul and Whitehead. Pannenberg develops a system of thought based on futurity as the primary ontological principle. Richard Neuhaus writes in his introduction, "Theology either illuminates the public understanding of human existence or it has no worthy claim to our attention."⁶⁹ Reading about the power of the future as Pannenberg describes it has helped to illuminate my understanding of human existence.

⁶⁷Ralph E. James, Jr., "Process Cosmology and Theological Particularity," in Brown, James, and Reeves, p. 406.

⁶⁸Wolfhart Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969).

⁶⁹Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Profile of a Theologian," in Pannenberg, p. 12.

Theology is a discipline that must involve both mind and experience. Neuhaus describes Pannenberg's path to Christian affirmation as having been an intellectual path, yet one directly related to his experience. Because he believes theology is subject to the larger human community, rationality—a tool of human society—must be used vigorously. However, since man is imperfect in his rationality, he must be open to his own vulnerability. Realizing that life consists of a mass of provisionalities it is impossible for Christians to hold to a certain revelation. Rather, they should take risks on the basis of probabilities. Each person must take himself seriously as an important event in the intellectual history of mankind.

Pannenberg's theology is dependent on an understanding of continuity between past and future, a continuity which in turn is dependent on the social character of thought. The continuity of history is clear in the Christian idea that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Something

new is happening now and this forces us from our passive wait for the future. Sin is man's hostility to the on-coming future. Because of Jesus and his gospel, the future is not entirely unknown and therefore it is not a threat to those who trust its promise. Finally, when we talk about the power of the future we in fact are also talking about the nature of God.

The past is invalid if we attempt to preserve its forms. Thus, "The heritage can only be saved by further development of its human significance."⁷⁰

Everything man says about revelation, salvation, revolution, God, the future—all is encompassed in that history which we have experienced in part and which is being fulfilled in the coming of the Kingdom.⁷¹

All meaning is found in history. Truth can only be drawn from history, not imposed upon it.

Central to Pannenberg's theological formulation is the resurrected Christ. In Jesus our common destiny was completely anticipated in a personal event. In him we get a taste of the future and this taste helps us to

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 29.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 30.

accept in faith the promise of the future rather than view it as a threat. We see not only what will be but what already is.

In describing Pannenberg as a theologian of reason Neuhaus says,

To be reasonable means to be open to those aspects of reality which do not conform to our conceptual processes. An adequate rationality takes into account the nonrational and what presents itself as irrational. Theology of reason does not try to flatten out the rough terrain of reality or to minimize the diverse and contradictory character of experience. There is no effort to impose a superficial synthesis. A reasonable man, says Pannenberg, stands in fearful awe before the mystery of existence, before the power of the future that will in its coming resolve the contradictions of experience.⁷² The beginning of wisdom is indeed the fear of God.

Finally, Neuhaus describes Pannenberg's idea of faith as trust in the power of the future and daring to act "...in full awareness of the partiality of sight."⁷³

Now I turn to Pannenberg's own text in Theology and the Kingdom of God. The message of Jesus Christ was centered in his proclamation of the imminent Kingdom of God. However, this message has been distorted by linking

⁷²Ibid., p. 45.

⁷³Ibid., p. 46f.

that Kingdom to man's actions. We must change from an ethical to an eschatological understanding of the Kingdom. The key is in its imminence. Fundamental to the Kingdom is its futurity, a futurity that is inextricably linked to our present. We glimpse God's future glory in his present rule.

God's being is his rule, but since his Kingdom is future, God is still not complete. His rule is still becoming. Therefore, God cannot be found in present reality. This points to a certain ambiguity about the future as well as about God's being. Because the future is not the prisoner of past and present, "...we speak of the contingency of events according to which, in a particular instant, something is decided that was only a possibility before."⁷⁴ This contingency allows us to relate to God as a personal power. Two elements are required if we are to speak of acts as personal acts. Along with contingency must also be unity. A meaningful connection must exist in a series of contingent events, lest they be seen as

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 57.

erratic. The divine unity of God is in the power of the future, which can be "...conceived as being greater than any sum of contingent events."⁷⁵

Pannenberg links three ideas together—unity, the future, and sovereignty.

Sovereignty establishes unity. The coming of God to his sovereignty over the world is his gift to the world, unifying its scattered events. The coming of God also means that God has the power over the future of those who are under his rule. Thus the circle is closed.⁷⁶

Perception requires unity amidst plurality, and unity and power are sensible only in relation to the future.

Without the future, power cannot exist, for the future creates past and present. God, the power of the future, dominates the remotest past. Thus, Pannenberg defines eternity: "Eternity is not timelessness. The God of the coming Kingdom must be called eternal because he is not only the future of our present but has been also the future of every past age."⁷⁷ Pannenberg gives credit and thanks to Whitehead and Hartshorne for incorporating

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 59.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 59f.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 62.

time into the essence of God. But he disagrees with Whitehead's suggestion that this implies a development in God. Rather, he argues that "...what turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along."⁷⁸ Once again, the ontological priority of the future is the distinguishing characteristic. "...Only for the one who exists as the final future is the totally comprehensive present a meaningful idea. This present which comprises everything is what the Greek philosophers meant by eternity."⁷⁹

The creative power of the future can only be seen in the context of love. God's love was and is revealed in the imminent Kingdom, as pointed out in the message of Jesus. This message is present in the way the Kingdom manifests itself before coming into full power, and "...wherever the message of the imminent Kingdom of God is accepted, God has already come into power and man now has communion with God."⁸⁰ Power moves the present into new possibilities, both good and evil, but creative love sets

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 63.

⁷⁹Ibid..

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 65.

the present free to life. It grants a new existence. "The futuristic power of creative love" is Pannenberg's corrective to Whitehead's tendency to eliminate creativity. "In Whitehead's own theory the combined effect of a 'Creativity' which is attributed to matter and of ideal structures (eternal objects) tends to eliminate the novelty and contingency of events, in spite of Whitehead's efforts to offset such a tendency."⁸¹ Only the future allows the creature a share in that which is larger than itself.

Each event is a creation of love in itself. Causality is understood in that each new event must relate itself to the existing world. In this way nature's continuity means building bridges to the past, not from the past. Awareness of the future is a unique characteristic of man. This awareness necessitates asking questions, distinguishing the future from the present. But by asserting himself against the future, man denies his authentic existence. To be truly free, man must be related to the

⁸¹Ibid., p. 66.

God of the power of the future.⁸² For Pannenberg, the notion of causality makes sense only in a reversal of the usual time sequence. We begin with the future, the reality of God, and this confronts us in such a way that it interprets our past and frees us for a creating faith.

The central concern of the Church must be the Kingdom of God. Any opposition between Church and the world is false, because the Kingdom is a universal idea. Thus, the future of the entire world is at stake. In order to live up to its vocation, the Church must be "...an eschatological community pioneering the future of all mankind."⁸³ Communion with Christ and dedication to the future of the world as God's Kingdom are one and the same. This in no way identifies the Church as the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, the Church as we know it is in its imperfection a provisional structure. The Kingdom of God is beyond the Church, although it can be manifested in the Church. In fact, often the Kingdom of God can be clearly seen outside the established Church and may even be

⁸²Ibid., p. 69.

⁸³Ibid., p. 75.

opposed to it.

Sovereignty requires unity, and unity is brought about by justice and by caring for one another. Love, law and justice go hand in hand. Subjective behavior and social institution must never be separated. The future Kingdom demands obedience in the present, but our satisfaction is not in present obedience. It is in the glory of the future that will be realized. The Church is a preliminary and partial manifestation of the future Kingdom of God.

Thinking politically, we realize that present forms of society do not provide the necessary human satisfaction. We have been unable to provide a truly human form of political structure. Man needs honest institutions which will bring him into relation with the ultimate reality. The Church can be this sort of institution if it is willing to play the role of conscientious societal critic. This role cannot mean isolation from society, however well intended. To be concerned for the Kingdom of

God is to be concerned for society. What the Church can and must do is point society to its fulfillment in the future reality, demythologizing political structures. It must provide the value formation and impetus that allows society to face change with faith rather than with fear.

"The Church in secular society provides the individual with an opportunity to participate now in the ultimate destiny of human life."⁸⁴ This requires being endowed with the Holy Spirit, the Almighty God himself whose breath blows through all creation. The divine spirit was poured forth in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unity with Jesus Christ through personal trust is a pledge by the Christian of his own future participation in the Kingdom of God.

God's present future embraces the entire world. "...There is no life that does not live from God's love."⁸⁵ The Church must witness to the freedom of the Spirit, realizing that the Spirit may break through best outside the Church. The unity available to all through the Spirit

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 86.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 88.

is a healing force, both in personal integration as well as in society. But the Church should be working itself out of business, turning over to political structures those tasks more readily accomplished by them. "The only irreplaceable social contribution of the Church is the personal integration of human life by confronting man with the ultimate mystery of life, with the eternal God and his purposes in history."⁸⁶ Even the liturgy of worship and celebration essentially has a unifying effect. "The liturgy of the Christian community...is done by some but for all. It is filled with universal and eschatological significance for everyman."⁸⁷

If we agree with Pannenberg that the Church as an ecclesiastical organization is a provisional structure, it logically follows that it cannot be authoritarian. The Kingdom of God has a liberating effect on all persons with faith. We are free from all other authorities, including the Church. The identity and purity of the Christian tradition are just as important today as ever. However,

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 91.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 92.

with the advent of the historical method, authoritarian institutions lost any valid authority they may have had.

Pannenberg adds further:

I venture the judgment that the freedom of the children of God became mature and exerted a broader influence on the transformation of social and political life only after the authoritarian form of the Christian tradition had become superfluous.⁸⁸

The Church's proclamation today cannot rest on traditional authority. Rational information and discussion are needed. To be sure, the theologian points and judges, but he also aids the community in making its own rational judgments. Especially does this include the sermon. The sermon attempts to reformulate the substantial truth of the Christian faith in such a way that all people can listen and judge its validity for themselves.⁸⁹ The goal of the Church and of theologians then becomes to offer guidance and to inspire courage that the individual might himself find wholeness in the presence of God. In like manner, missions becomes aid in self-development.

Obviously ethics also must be formed by eschatol-

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 96.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 97.

ogy. "Divine authority" is no longer the solution to ethical dilemmas. If the conscience only reflects the belief-system of the conscientious man constructed by his society, it is no more than social convention. By looking for "some ontological foundation of ethical standards," we can find ethical statements that are "...distinguished from the arbitrary or authoritarian proclamation of imperatives."⁹⁰

The best starting point for ethics is a striving for the good, a good which man does not yet possess conclusively. To do this we need a criterion for the good. Good is something that brings man happiness, and Augustine says that this happiness can come only in commitment to God. The good is not yet fulfilled. For Pannenberg, "The idea of the good is essentially related to present man and his world because the good is concerned with the future of this man and his world."⁹¹ But God's imminent Kingdom brings concrete embodiment to the good, and has priority over all human striving for the good. Because

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 105.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 111.

this good is not located in an isolated transcendency, it becomes concern for the world. God's very being is identified with the coming of his Kingdom. Thus "...to love God can only mean to participate in the dynamics of his love for this world and for this mankind."⁹² We participate in God's love by loving our fellowmen. Reminiscent of Jacques Ellul, Pannenberg maintains that human action cannot resolve the human predicament. At the same time a commitment to the improvement of human life in the present world is necessary and will provide some results.⁹³

He emphasizes again the provisional nature of the human situation within which commitment is demanded. Confronted by the future, we must take up the cross, judging and transforming as necessary. The required kind of commitment is only possible in the dynamic of Christian love which relates us personally to the world. Love involves freedom and equality. It means creating unity. It means nurturing wholeness, authenticity and independence. Love supports and respects at the same time that it judges.

⁹²Ibid., p. 112.

⁹³Ibid., p. 114.

"...The highest good for all men, whether they know it or not, is the future of God's Kingdom. If a particular action springs from the spirit of creative love and contributes to individual and social integration, unity, and peace, then that particular action expresses the spirit of God's Kingdom."⁹⁴ This sort of love is possible in the context of the understanding of human solidarity. Man's hope is a common hope.

The final destiny of man is to be free and equal and we can participate in this destiny now through faith in Jesus Christ. The individual is the purpose of society. Any form of government that neglects that fact is based on power structures. The common good must be the concern of political structures. Christians believe that the imminent Kingdom of God has a prior claim over all other conflicting claims. Even peace is always "for the time being," because it is based on provisional mutual agreements. "The preliminary nature of our present and of our present projections for the future is at the heart of

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 118.

an ethics conditioned on the coming Kingdom of God."⁹⁵ Jesus himself was only a preliminary forerunner for God's imminent Kingdom. But we must love the preliminary, lest we not recognize the ultimate when it arrives. We can embrace our world because we have hope in its fulfillment, a hope we have seen in Jesus Christ's message of the Kingdom.

In contrast with Jacques Ellul, Pannenberg sees man's action in the world in a more hopeful light:

Hope for the coming Kingdom knows that ultimate fulfillment is beyond human powers to effect. Yet, far from being condemned to inactivity, we are inspired to prepare this present for the future. Such preparation is the work of hope carried out by love. Conscious of the preliminary character of his achievements, the man of hope is open to more promising answers to the problems that claim his energy. Thus he is opened⁹⁶ beyond himself to the future of God's Kingdom.

Finally, "If we reflect once more upon our theological example, upon the definitive meaning of the appearance of God's future in Jesus of Nazareth, in which God's love is revealed, then perhaps this can be said: The

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 126.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 126.

future wills to become present; it tends toward its arrival in a permanent present."⁹⁷

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 142f.

CHAPTER V

PERSONAL STATEMENT

A. Meaning out of Chaos: Theology

No amount of arguing can eliminate the problem with which this dissertation began: the world is complex and thus perplexing. We want to understand what is happening around us and within us, but there are no easy or simple answers. We definitely are affected by the cultural claims that act in our lives. Political, sociological and psychological structures seem to have prior claims on our actions. Yet, ironically, the very historical awareness of modern man that allows him to see how he has been determined acts as a force for liberation. Through this awareness man is given the insight that allows him to break from the mold. Experience tells me that I am both fated and free. I cannot deny that my personality is determined in large part by my family, cultural placement,

moment of history, etc. At the same time I find myself acting and being in ways that are difficult to explain causally. There is a sense of being determined environmentally, but there is also a sense of being determined by something other that has an ultimate dimension. This ultimate dimension is not necessarily a God or force removed from the surrounding world. I simply know that on occasion I surprise myself with new insights and new freedoms that cannot be attributed to usual causes. On some occasions I sense the ability to incorporate my experience in novel ways.

In the early history of man much of what happened in the world could not be explained in rational ways. Limits and boundaries to man's world and to his abilities were quite decided. Formulating ideas of God that filled in the gaps made sense in this context. God was known in the limits of man and his world. Recently, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others have argued that looking at man's weaknesses is looking in the wrong place for God. Rather,

God can be found in the strengths of man. It seems to me that arguing whether God is found in man's strengths or in his weaknesses is a false argument with no real opposite points. We learn about the nature of God both in our limitations, our "up-againstness," as well as in those areas in which we experience personal and social power.

Karl Barth begins with revelation as the source and basis of man's knowledge of and relation to God. The problem then becomes one of deciding how God reveals himself. Is God's self-revelation complete in the Bible? In Jesus Christ? In the Church? At various times each has been argued. It has also been said that revelation is what takes over when reason cannot cope. Thus, H. Richard Niebuhr writes,

There is a tendency in the radical movement to use the word 'reason' to designate the methods and the content of knowledge to be found in cultural society; 'revelation' to indicate that Christian knowledge of God and duty that is derived from Jesus Christ and resident in the Christian society. These definitions, then, are connected with the denigration of reason and the exaltation of revelation.¹

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 76.

Reason and revelation are considered to be of two different orders. Yet, today scientists address themselves to a reality which is viewed as only one part of a much broader spectrum. Although revelation and reason are of different orders, they are not contradictory orders. Just as Pannenberg's rational approach must include the irrational and the nonrational, so our faith must be a reasoned faith. The one place where I come down strong for revelation as a Christian places me with Wilhelm Herrmann when he writes,

The whole revelation that God has ordained for us in our historical situation is ours only when we can see that the Person of Jesus surpasses all else that is great and noble in humanity, and that behind those whose influence upon us is strongest, He is visible as their life-giver and their Lord.²

Science and theology both have concerned themselves through the years with the problem of determinism versus free will. Determinism views history in terms of cause and effect relationships. All that I am and do is causally related to the structures of my society and to

²Wilhelm Herrmann, The Communion of the Christian with God (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), p. 60.

my place in history. There might be a kind of freedom involved in the way one interprets his past, but this at most is a limited freedom. Causality is a linear relationship moving from the past to the present. The idea of providence is slightly different in that the guide for action is not history per se. Rather, a detectable plan of history is apparent. Usually if providence is believed the plan is seen to depend on God. God may or may not determine individual actions, but he certainly has a plan for individual lives and history in general. If a person believes in such a providence and believes he knows at least partially what that providence asks and promises, his actions will be affected. Belief in providence can act as a guiding prophecy in which man attempts to unify the world with its destiny as it is understood. Determinism and fate are unsatisfactory solutions since they have little or no explanation for novel actions. Providence is a bit better, but the problem then to resolve is how one knows what that detectable plan of history truly is.

For years the Methodist Church had no real doctrine of theological authority to which to point. John Wesley's sermons and other writings served as a kind of loose guide, as did statements coming out of General Conference meetings. Only recently has the United Methodist Church appointed a study commission for the purpose of sorting out doctrinal authority problems. The answer is not simple, but I find it extraordinarily sensible. The statement, which can be found in the 1972 Discipline as well as in numerous other recent materials, refers to a fourfold test for theological belief. First, the Bible is affirmed as the primary source for belief in God as well as for other religious understandings. But the Bible does not stand alone as revelation of God. It must be seen through tradition. We must examine with seriousness the many historical creeds and formulations of Christian faith and action that begin with the New Testament Church and continue through to contemporary church history. We are a community of believers, and the community is

uniquely able to reach conclusions of truth. These conclusions are not simply cases of majority rule, but must constantly be retested against the data given in the Bible. Thirdly, the man of faith must test Biblical and traditional truths against his own experience. Truth does not exist unless it can be affirmed through life experiences of relationship and feeling. At the same time subjective feelings are individualistic without coming up against the Bible and the Christian tradition. The final test of doctrine is reason. Whereas it remains true that man cannot think his way into religious belief, it nevertheless also remains true that belief need not be opposed to reason. A rational approach to religion includes the necessary affirmation of that which remains apparently nonrational and irrational. Thus, Bible, tradition, experience and reason are each essential. These four bases constantly inform, test, and evaluate each other. A necessary consequence of this interaction is that theological doctrine is neither rigid nor arbitrary. Our

present understanding is provisional and must be open to change.

Consequently, a doctrine of God must meet the test of Bible, tradition, experience and reason. This leads me to a belief in a God who is absolute and transcendent at the same time that he is imminent and ever-changing. I cannot relate to an impersonal God, a being that is unchanging, remote, and uninterested in and unaffected by my actions. In the same way I cannot relate to a person who is unaffected by my feelings and actions. I come to a person expecting that person to have a firm identity. He has a personality that defines him in a fairly specific way. But I also expect the interaction with that person to require give and take, changes in him as well as in me, and growth and response in both of us. Love is meaningless unless it includes the fact that my actions have effect on the loving person, even if that be negative effect. God is not a wall but a personal being to whom I can relate. This requires some sense of

transcendence, lest God be not God. But the imminence seen in the caring and suffering of Jesus brings the relationship into reality. Thus theology for me cannot be separated from my understanding of Jesus and the manner of his loving relationships, experienced historically and presently.

My personal need for experiencing both transcendence and imminence is largely the reason for my being enthusiastic about Alfred North Whitehead and process theism. Whitehead stresses the interdependence of all entities, including God. By postulating a primordial and a consequent pole of God, it is possible to view God both as absolute in his everbeing and absolute in his power of ever-surpassing himself. Because I have self-interest, I can order my own systematic environment. My actions have meaning and are not felt to be determined by external powers or by God. Since God is the principle of concretization and because he gives me an ideal aim, the apparent disorder of my life is given order and direction. There

is a subtle distinction between being told what to do and being lured toward an ideal aim. My freedom exists in my ability toprehend God either positively or negatively. My experience and understanding of Jesus Christ has almost always made sense to me. However, Whitehead was the first to help me see God-as-God as a being with whom I have truly personal relationship. Process theism fares well for me against the four bases for theological doctrine.

Wolfhart Pannenberg's formulation of future as the primary ontological principle amplifies my understanding of Whitehead. I think I understand the distinction made between Whitehead and Pannenberg, sensing the primary emphasis in process theism on the ordering of givens. Causality for Whitehead does have a certain past-orientation, despite the lure of the ideal aim given by God. Pannenberg insists that it is the future that confronts us, interprets our present and gives us hope. This future is the same future that has confronted every historical present. Present existence is a mass of provisionalities, yet

we have a taste of that future through communion with God in the experience of Jesus Christ. Again, the center is Christ. The taste of the Kingdom of God that we have provides men of faith with hope rather than threat.

I believe that a statement about God is a statement about the world, and that the Kingdom of God is a universal kingdom. The Christ-event is the all-important center of our faith. In the Christ figure and Jesus' proclamation of the imminence of the Kingdom of God, we can participate in the future. We can have faith that there will be some order that can and must develop from our provisional present structures and beliefs. Man does not have nature. He has history, but this is a history that gets its meaning from the future which confronts our every present. The future will not be an apocalyptic break from our present, but rather a continual transformation through communion with God. History and future are inextricably intertwined. We can talk about the continuity of our history at the same time we can talk about

contingency and novelty. New paths open up because of our ability toprehend positively or negatively and because those prehensions have some effect on God's being. God is not removed from the world, nor is the world synonymous with God. I learn about God through my relationships with myself and with other persons, through my interaction with history and with the world surrounding. At the same time, God informs me of myself and other persons through the principle of concretion. His divine lure confronts me in the eschatological future that I have seen and experienced in a provisional way through Jesus Christ and the community of Christian faith.

Thus I share in the three theological convictions that H. Richard Niebuhr says are common to the conversionist type:

- 1) ...creative activity of God and of Christ-in-God...
- 2) ...the nature of man's fall from his created goodness
- 3) ...to God all things are possible in a history that is fundamentally not a course of merely human events but always a dramatic interaction between God and man.³

³Niebuhr, pp. 191f.

B. Meaningful Actions: Ethics

We exist today in a world in which the old value-systems no longer have authoritative meaning. We attempt to secure meaning rationally in the natural workings of the surrounding world. Harvey Cox defines secularization "...as the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of his attention away from other worlds and toward this one."⁴ Likewise, Peter Berger has written, "...secularization brings about a demonopolization of religious traditions and thus, inso facto, leads to a pluralistic situation."⁵ So we look around at our world for answers, but pluralism confuses rather than resolves our problems. The variety of possibilities paralyzes rather than frees.

What is found by turning to the secular society? We have become so entranced by the scientific method that truth is only that which can be proven rationally and experimentally. If some portion of our experience does not

⁴Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 17.

⁵Peter C. Berger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 134.

fit neatly into reasonable structures, then it cannot be valid. There is a decided value in the skepticism, excellence, and accountability that are inherent to the scientific method, but technology has been an outgrowth of science. This in turn has become a controlling factor in all of life. "Technology objectifies man, nature, cultures, worlds, in order to organize and dominate. This is its genius. It is also its enslaving and debilitating character."⁶ In The Technological Society Ellul demonstrates that technology is the monster created by Frankenstein. No matter the intentions behind its development, it has now become the master rather than its creators' servant. Alvin Toffler offers the following cautions in respect to technology in Future Shock:

First, bitter experience should have taught us by now to look far more carefully at the potential side effects of any new technology....

Second, and much more complex, we must question the long-term impact of a technical innovation on the social, cultural and psychological environment....

Third, an even more difficult and pointed question: Apart from actual changes in the social structure, how will a proposed new technology affect the value system

⁶Gibson Winter, Being Free (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 77.

of the society?
 Fourth, and finally...For each major technological innovation we must ask: What are its accelerative implications?

Possibly the most critical problem with technological society is the lack of some inbuilt mechanism for questioning and testing the ongoing system. Technological society refuses to engage in self-reflection. Its control rests on the assumption that the ultimate good is increased technological growth.

With the mushrooming of technology many of our traditional forms of authority and power have fallen by the wayside. We are entering an era in which power is based not on property but on technical knowledge and intellectual skills. Parental authority is useless to a society that depends on constantly changing sciences and techniques. Charles Reich writes that

...if we treat the question of priorities as a moral issue we misunderstand the way in which priorities are established in our society. They are very definitely not established by individual moral decisions. They are decided by the exercise of power, power controlled by the most massive forces in our society.

⁷Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 437, 439.

⁸Charles A. Reich, The Greening of America (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 179.

For this reason Harvey Cox states, "The truth is that our freedom in the age of organization is a question of the responsible control and exercise of power—vast, towering, unprecedented power."⁹ We must develop a kind of "power over power."

We live in an urban society that is all-extensive. Urbanization extends to all segments of society through the powers of high mobility, economic concentration, and mass communications.¹⁰ Cox says that some of the attributes of this urbanization include organization as the basic integrating principle of our society, this-worldliness, pragmatism, and social and geographical mobility. Man is confronted with a vast series of choices to be made. He sits at a "vast and immensely complicated switchboard" with a wide range and frequency of necessary choices.¹¹

The constant need for making choices is confounded by the tremendous speed with which technological culture changes. The touchstones in life today are temporary.

⁹Cox, p. 174.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 40f.

Man lives with a mood or feeling of impermanence. But any organism can adapt to only so much change. Such adaptation requires physical as well as psychological activity. The interaction is constant between man and his environment. If true dialogue were possible, the situation would be eased, but as Gibson Winter writes,

...the techno-culture cherishes innovation on its own terms. It accepts feedback but not authentic dialogue...the innovations which it encourages only reinforce the system....So the vaunted innovation of the techno-culture occurs only within the narrow confines of its own programs.¹²

The adaptation tends to be a one-way activity. However, there are limits to one's adaptability, and Toffler points to the danger of "Future Shock." With "future shock," man suffers from overstimulation. Instead of having no options available, he is given so many choices that he becomes paralyzed by lack of ability to make meaningful decisions. He is unable to incorporate the extensive amounts of change. The easy way out is temporary or permanent refusal to change, whether voluntary or involuntary.

¹²Winter, p. 104.

Values and their bases are involved in constant change as are so many other elements of society. Society is temporary, with values turning over faster than ever before in history. Man must learn to anticipate the direction and rate of change as best he can. In doing so, the church must develop a theology of positive social change. "Both the gospel and ideologies of social change center on a doctrine of redemption."¹³

The ever present danger is that some person or institution will grasp at a particular doctrine and assume that it can provide answers to all the questions for now and ever. This grasping may be out of desperation or it may be out of feelings of conscious power. It may be conscious or unconscious, but however intended, ideologies are formed. Ideologies tend to take a truth or partial truth that can be demonstrated in historical experience and institutionalize it. In doing so they lose any ability to bring to that truth criticism from a religious ultimate. Power seems to be the key, whether it be power of

¹³Rosemary Radford Ruether, The Radical Kingdom (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 2.

individual actions or power over other institutions and persons. Paul Tillich writes,

A term which we used in our daily language that is very close to the meaning of ideology is rationalization. We speak of the rationalization of individuals who use ideas to justify the power they hold over other persons or to justify their indulgences in certain kinds of pleasures. Applied to social groups rationalization becomes 'ideology.'¹⁴

One of the time-honored methods for resolving the conflict between culture and faith, culture and theology, or just simply culture and one's ability to live, has been the act of separating oneself from that culture. In H. Richard Niebuhr's description of the Christ-against-culture type, he states that, "The counterpart of loyalty to Christ and the brothers is the rejection of cultural society."¹⁵ The New Testament offers no clear statement about proper attitudes toward one's culture. Tension exists between the ideal and the real. However, as Albrecht Ritschl points out, "...in His relation of sonship to the Father (Jesus) recognizes Himself as set apart from the world. (Matt. xi. 27)"¹⁶ Jacques Ellul suggests a con-

¹⁴Paul Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) p. 186.

¹⁵Niebuhr, p. 47.

¹⁶Albrecht Ritschl, Instruction in the Christian Religion (New York: Longmans, Green, 1901), p. 184.

stant tension. The city is corrupt, but it is in the city that we live out our lives. For him the task is to separate oneself in values, beliefs, and faith. At the same time the Christian is aware of his full participation in the city. In a sense he asks us to defy what we know to be inevitable. Toffler suggests the desirability of enclaves of stability, simplicity, or minority value systems. If man can enter and leave these as he wills, he can face overstimulation with more ease.

Summing up Whitehead's ethics as discussed earlier in this dissertation, 1) man's choice is real, and 2) man's action has meaning. Each individual has a self-interest, values that provide the basis for interpretation of past and present. God provides the divine lure and is the principle of concretion that ultimately will bring order to the world. He urges us to more orderly postures in each actual occasion. For Fannenberg, the present is confronted by the future, the Kingdom of God. Although present actions and present structures are provisional,

men is opened beyond himself to the possibilities of the Kingdom and acts in hopeful preparation for that ultimate future. The actor is placed in the necessary tension between his past and his ideal. This tension is a fine edge that requires a precarious balancing act, yet becomes hopeful in faith and communion with God through Christ.

It seems to me that the first element of an ethical stance is the confronting future. Man must become an actor in history rather than a reactor. The only meaningful action is that which is directed toward a goal, a principle, an understanding of the Kingdom of God. Rules and laws can be aids in this context. An understanding of the Kingdom of God is a definite necessity. Change can be managed only if it is anticipated. Taken in its pure form this is the stance of teleological ethics. However, as Pannenberg reminds us so ably, the provisionality of the present does not allow us to hold fast to anything, including goals. I must have a dream, a very definite goal for which to aim my actions. At the same time I must be

constantly prepared to revise my actions to fit fresh data.

There is a sense in which I must act in ways that fit the agenda of the world or those persons to whom I am related. Especially in the world of today's urbanization, no man can live in isolation. He always lives in community, and thus always lives among a web of interdependencies. There is a give-and-take process between an ideal and that which is required by the given situation. From H. R. Niebuhr comes the following passage:

In whatever form we interpret Christian ethics, in it Christ always has something of this double character. In him man is directed toward God; in him also God is directed toward men. Hence the Christian ethos is that of a community which knows through reason and through Jesus Christ what it and man in general should make out of life, or what law ought to be obeyed, and how; or what goal chosen; it also knows man's lack of power to undertake such a construction, pursue such a pilgrimage, or be obedient to such a will and law; finally, it is a community that finds itself driven to attempt what lies beyond man's strength and to persist hopefully in a hopeless journey toward the unattainable goal that Christ attained, to attempt an obedience that is ever in need of forgiveness; yet forgiven it attempts again to obey.¹⁷

¹⁷H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 163f.

A "responsible" ethics seems to be the best solution in our time of complete and complex interrelationships. Changes in small sections of societies or organizations cause changes in the total structure and all such possible changes must be considered. A systems approach is essential both individually and corporately. Major changes bring a multitude of minor changes, even "micro-changes."¹⁸ Conversely, the activity of a micro-section of a structure has the capacity to wreak havoc on the total structure. Actions cannot occur in a vacuum. They create immediate and long-range results, often in unexpected areas.

For me ethics has developed from personal experiences and understandings. This is more than a selfish or subjective approach, as it definitely is anchored by Bible and tradition. However, my ethics depend on one basic question, although it surfaces in many different formulations: How do people communicate? How do persons learn? How do persons care for one another? How do I

¹⁸ Toffler, p. 334.

love myself? What do I want most for myself? And how do I get it? A one word answer to these questions is simply dialogue--dialogue at all levels of interchange in society. I do not speak of dialogue only in terms of verbal language, but as any relational activity, whether it be verbal or non-verbal.

It seems to me that there are some basic necessities if dialogue is to occur, and these conditions do not just happen automatically. They must be planned and structured carefully or they weaken and malfunction. First one must have the power to get another's attention, whether by soft-spoken words or overt physical gestures. Self-determination requires power over one's own actions but also the power to make someone else stop and listen with lively interest. One interpretation of the Watts Rebellion of 1965 is that blacks in South Central Los Angeles had reached a point of extreme frustration in their attempts to communicate with the dominant culture through conventionally acceptable methods. Violence

became the necessary resort in order to gain the attention of the community. A second requirement for dialogue is openness toward other persons and their ideas and lifestyles. Just as God communicated with man through the suffering of Jesus Christ, we must communicate from the position of weakness and risk which openness implies.

When institutions or minds close, no growth is possible for either side of the aborted dialogue and no respect enters the interchange. Theoretically I cannot rule out the possibility of self-respect despite lack of external respect, but respect seems more on the order of a circular process. Self-respect leads to external respect leads to self-respect, etc. Finally, if true communication be possible there must be some level of shared meaning. The root words of "communication" point to "one with." The parties involved must speak the same language or at least understand the language of the other. There must be an appreciation of the plurality and the provisionality of all things including especially our ideas. We must wres-

tle with the decision of just what kinds of things are essential to any dialogue, but my expectation is that we will discover more and more kinds of differences that are valuable because they encourage the growth of all. Amidst plurality we must have unity, not uniformity. My concern is not so much with a person's ideas or even his actions except as they affect me and relationships with other persons. Ethics requires me to be in dialogue with myself and with others (including the non-human world), and with God.

Some observations relate to this need for dialogue in all realms of life. "...Heterogeneity is a valuable feature of the modern world, and should be guarded.... Like everything else in the secular city, variety must be planned for or it does not happen."¹⁹ At the same time it can be observed that pluralism is a fact of life.

A person, group or people may not be an isolated consciousness of culture, but each is a particular being which has been formed by a language and a tradition. We participate in a community from a particular place and perspective,²⁰ out of a particular history and with our own story.

¹⁹Cox, p. 85.

²⁰Winter, p. 138.

It is next to impossible for a person or group to earn a position in society by playing the game according to rules established by those in power.

...the best way to deal with angry or recalcitrant minorities is to open the system further, bringing them into it as full partners, permitting them to participate in social goal-setting, rather than attempting to ostracize or isolate them....In short, in politics, in industry, in education, goals set without the participation of those affected will be increasingly hard to execute.²¹

This concern is as valid for international politics as it is for interpersonal and intranational relationships.

The idea of the nation may no longer be relevant. A developing global community cannot tolerate one-way communication on the part of any nation, culture or religion.

The Christian today moves in a world of displacement, a world of temporariness and provisionalities. Different ideas of progress must be generated, ideas based on values other than production and consumerism. Different visions must be dreamed. Different provisional goals must be developed that allow participation in the future

²¹Toffler, p. 477.

Kingdom of God. One point on which I agree most strongly with Jacques Ellul is that we must act as though our lives depend on it, but at the same time not take ourselves too seriously. We must live with humor. Rubem Alves, writing in Tomorrow's Child,²² describes the necessity for a playful creativity and imagination that is a seed for a future community of hope. Not taking oneself too seriously means facing life with flexibility and spontaneity. It means seeing life as a tragicomic game that nobody wins but that does not have to be won to be enjoyed.

C. Ecclesiology: Shape and Role of the Church

On what grounds can religious structure be criticized? Some criterion of good and evil that goes beyond philosophical theory seems to be in order. Ethics involves a dynamic attempt to examine what is positive and creative in man's actions. The pragmatic side of my secularity leads me to look at institutions in light of

²²Rubem Alves, Tomorrow's Child (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

what is working. This does not mean that there is a necessary contradiction between the biblical view of truth and that which is emerging in our functional society. The primary criterion for judging the institution should be simply how well the mission is being accomplished.

It is ironic that with the vast majority of spokesmen ready to discuss church unity and renewal we still are faced with such a determined effort on the part of many to keep what exists. The main argument seems to have been that people are people and all are free to interpret and choose as they please as far as theological doctrine is concerned. "Honest convictions painfully arrived at" must be respected and "so long as such honest differences exist there will be need for likeminded persons to associate themselves together in the development of further theologies and practices coherent with these convictions."²³ However, this does not convince me of the need for the present denominational structure. There are other arguments emphasizing denominations that make more sense, but

²³Richard N. Bender, Called to be Relevant (Nashville: Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1964), p. 75.

they see a necessity for change or revaluation. H. R. Niebuhr discusses the use of new sects as an "...effective means of recalling Christendom to its mission,"²⁴ hence a helpful phase of denominational history. Thomas Oden sees a re-rootage in traditions as a possible method of church renewal. He states that "...in many instances it will prove to be a surprisingly strong leverage for moving seemingly implacable institutional structures. The denominational heritage is a fulcrum which can be used to move massive introverted denominations toward ecumenical dialogue and apostolic awareness."²⁵ And finally, Berger can talk about denominational identities as a "structurally required counterpart" to ecumenicity because of the need for marginal differentiation in the market situation.²⁶

The most common criticism of denominations seems to be that they are contrary to the teaching of New Testament Christianity. Paul's conception of the church as one body in Christ no longer is descriptive. This is true

²⁴H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (New York: Holt, 1929), p. 21.

²⁵Thomas C. Oden, The Community of Celebration (Nashville: Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1964), p. 65.

²⁶Berger, pp. 148-149.

but my objections to present denominational structures tend to be functional. First, we have allowed the church to become a mere echo for its cultural environment. Second, it is too easy for the minister today to get off the hook by appealing to the organization and to the expectations of denominational leaders.²⁷ Third, denominational structure has long been a drag on the movement to eliminate class and caste in society. Fourth, duplication of efforts occurs as denominations take off on their own private missions to the world. Finally, and most importantly, the institutions have become introverted and self-preservative. In place of the "Vision" we have the Discipline. In place of the world, we are out to save our institutional structures.

I think the crux of the problem with which we are faced is that which is faced by organizations in general, the deterioration of effective bureaucracy. Movements need organizations, organizations generally become bureaucratic, and soon Parkinson's laws of bureaucracy sneak in.

²⁷Robert Lee, "The Organizational Dilemma in American Protestantism," in Robert Clyde Johnson (ed.) The Church and Its Changing Ministry (Philadelphia: General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1961).

As much as we may complain about structures, it is a well accepted fact that every social organism must take on some form in order to exist in society. "If an institutional structure is lacking, power will be exercised by powerful men without adequate control and without even the conscious realization of members of the group that the group has in fact been effectively transformed."²⁸ Yet organization is more than a necessary evil. Proper organization can be that whereby one is freed to do the things which he needs and desires to do.

No longer do the churches have a monopoly on society's value systems. Not only do they compete with each other as denominations, but they also must compete with secular institutions such as business, politics and elements of counterculture. In a pluralistic situation allegiance becomes voluntary. Thus, we are forced into a market situation. The religious organizations must form groups which will allow successful competition for the customer. This may mean cartelization (comity and ecu-

²⁸John B. Snook, "Ecumenism in a Secular Age," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXII: 1 (November, 1966), 52f.

menicity) or it may mean stiffer inter-denominational competition. In either case, the organizational structure becomes increasingly complex.²⁹

As a cautionary warning, it is dangerous to see religion as a commodity to be sold on the open market. But at any rate, we find in the contemporary situation a steadily increasing process of bureaucratization. "Inter-denominational and denominational bureaucracies are seen as paralleling secular organizations in their patterns of compulsions and motivations."³⁰ As bureaucratic structures spread from institution to institution, we find that no matter what an individual denomination may have as tradition, doctrine, and official polity, structures are increasingly similar. At least operationally all are functioning bureaucracies.

Each person has his own set of assumptions on which he bases his expectations of the actions of others. The manager needs a theory by which he can predict with some degree of accuracy how the individual will be and

²⁹Berger, pp. 130ff.

³⁰Martin E. Marty, The New Shape of American Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 63.

act. This theory depends on an understanding of personal operational needs and of causality, directedness and motivation as they relate to human behavior. In reference to the organizational goal, the wish is to get the most possible out of each individual member. Individual cooperation is the key concept. My assumptions about the need for dialogue and what it requires lead me to affirm much of what Douglas McGregor has written in The Human Side of Enterprise. McGregor contrasts "Theory X" and "Theory Y" and demonstrates a new understanding of management. Theory X said that men inherently dislike work, so they must be coerced and directed. However, Theory Y assumes that men enjoy work, seek responsibility, are self-directed and imaginative. "The central principle which derives from Theory Y is that of integration; the creation of conditions such that the members of the organization can achieve their own goals best by directing their efforts toward the success of the enterprise."³¹ Therefore, a person-centered rather than an institution-centered

³¹Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 49.

organization is desired.

In a simple cooperative system of two or more persons who have a specific systematic relationship for at least one definite end,³² management as such is inessential. However, as units are added to the complex of cooperation, the need for communication centers develops. Executive organization begins with the need to create a definite system of communication.³³ The other two basic functions of executive organization are securing personal services and formulating purposes and objectives of the organization.

As administrative tasks develop, the administration becomes more bureaucratized. This "...bureaucratization is occasioned more by intensive and qualitative enlargement and internal deployment of the scope of administrative tasks than by their extensive and quantitative increase."³⁴ Thus, the individual executive is given increased responsibility. In a pure bureaucracy Weber says the sort of person who gains such a position is 1)

³²Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938, 1966), p. 65.

³³Ibid., p. 217.

³⁴McGregor, p. 212.

striving for social esteem, 2) appointed by a superior authority, 3) given tenure for life, 4) normally given a fixed salary, and 5) a career man within the hierarchy.

Executive management presupposes a thorough and expert training and the full working capacity of the office holder. It presupposes a specialized job rather than personal attributes. But if good church management is functional, it "...requires that the techniques used in the program of the churches should be the most effective ones available for reaching the ends sought."³⁵ If dialogue and community are elements of the end sought by the church, then maybe one of our first necessary steps is to stop referring to ministers as managers.

One of the basic assumptions concerning bureaucracy that has usually been made is the necessity for an organizational chart. Undoubtedly a "...firmly ordered system of super- and subordination in which there is supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones"³⁶ is necessary for successful management, but once again we

³⁵William H. Leach, Handbook of Church Management (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1958), p. 5.

³⁶H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 197.

must be careful of persons. The organization chart implies that role structure, authority, communication, and power all follow the same lines of interaction. No allowance is made for informal organization by which power is usually distributed.

Furthermore, the very pyramidal shape of most hierarchical organizations has a profound effect on the individual. Into the picture come increased dependency, increased competitiveness, "evaluation fear," the idea of individual responsibility, and increased difficulties in communication. All of these contribute to the dehumanization process.³⁷ The whole church is structured to tell people what to do and think.

In order to manage an organization there must be some basis for deciding who will have the final say on specific decisions. General rules are an aid but they still must be interpreted and enforced. Thus, we come to the crucial problem of power versus authority. Authority is generally associated with the formal structure, or

³⁷Harold J. Leavitt, Managerial Psychology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, 1964), p. 378.

organizational chart, whereas power generally is associated with the informal systems of interaction. Power involves the ability to effect the actions of others, while authority gives the "right" to exercise this power.

Authority carries power with it as an essential part of the office, but power is derived in large part from personal abilities and may be incongruous with that expected from the authority position.

Conventional organizational theory rests on the assumption that authority is central and indispensable to managerial control.³⁸ It is two-way in that authority must be accepted by the member to whom it is directed. Effective authority further depends on the ability to enforce it through punishment and on the availability of counter-measures.³⁹ However, restrictive authority may backfire, leading to aggression toward the authority figure.

The power structure is at least as important as is the authority structure. Rather than its being based on

³⁸McGregor, p. 18.

³⁹Ibid., p. 21.

position and property alone, power depends also on personality, technical knowledge, and skills. Be that as it may "...those who hold power will seek to legitimate it; that is, they will seek authority."⁴⁰ There is more comfort and social esteem in knowing that one has the "right" to continue operating as has been the case all along.

According to Weber one of the sources for the validation of the authority relation is charisma. A charismatic individual is one who "...is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities."⁴¹ The authority of a charismatic leader is by its very nature unstable because it gains its legitimacy from the leader's personality. This legitimacy must constantly be proved. The charismatic power rests on personal devotion and on the recognition of the personal mission of the charismatic leader. Therefore, charismatic authority goes beyond everyday routine and is the very opposite of bureaucratic domination. Historically,

⁴⁰Paul M. Harrison, Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 62

⁴¹Ibid., p. 74.

the church accepts Jesus Christ as the central charismatic leader.

However, the charismatic leader does not live forever. When the charismatic leader dies, "...attempts are made to preserve the benefits of charisma, resulting in 'routinization of charisma.'"⁴² This quasi-charismatic structure is the natural successor to the charismatic founder. As discipline substitutes habituation to routinized skill for personal devotion, "sense of duty" and "conscientiousness" arise. As charisma comes into the permanent institutions of a community, it gives way to powers of tradition or of rational socialization.⁴³ Charisma recedes as a creative power and allows the importance of individual action to become diminished. Thus charisma becomes depersonalized. It is shifted "...from a sense of an extraordinary personal gift to an impersonal capacity that in principle can be taught and learned."⁴⁴

As charisma becomes routinized into the organization and individual action is overshadowed, the institu-

⁴²Lee, p. 87.

⁴³Gerth and Mills, p. 253.

⁴⁴Lee, p. 90.

tion becomes the dominant force for action. In the process of developing organization, its instrumental purposes become exalted as ends. The self-perpetuation of the institution becomes the need around which goals are established. Upon those methods for achieving its goals which have succeeded in the past, the organization begins to place a premium. One of the major factors involved here is the desire of executive leaders to retain their specialness and prestige. One's position depends on the stability of the organization, and this contributes to a self-perpetuating bureaucracy.

"The occasional crystallization or institutionalization of the kingdom of God movement is apparently inevitable."⁴⁵ But we must remember that once established a bureaucracy is an extremely difficult organism to kill. If it were to continue toward its goal, there would be no difficulty, but institutional narcissism invariably brings with it a corruption of the mission. When once the institutional structures become inflexible, an attack

⁴⁵H. Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1956), p. 166.

against over-institutionalization is needed.⁴⁶

Ideally the individual in bureaucracy is not a victim of organization but a beneficiary. The person willingly contributes to a cooperative system because his goals are close enough to the system's goals to allow him to accept them as being the same. If his needs are unsatisfied, he leaves the organization.

However, as the routinization of charisma occurs, size and specialization increase, and duties and conscientiousness are learned. It becomes increasingly difficult psychologically for a person to drop out. Because people have a basic need for community, most persons will succumb to group pressure unless they are given a minimal amount of support. Therefore it is more secure to be a depersonalized member of a group than to be a person standing alone.

Just the same, we live in an age of organization. The task of the church becomes one of showing to the world "...that an association of free people for a common

⁴⁶Johnson, p. 25.

goal can operate effectively and responsibly."⁴⁷

From its beginning the church saw itself in terms of mission. For the sake of this mission, each member was given a designated task. Thus, specialization was present almost from the start. However, as the years progressed, the church began losing the image of the mission and the organizational image became foremost. Today we can be functional in two ways. We can once again assign tasks for the sake of the mission, or we can be specialists for the sake of the institution. In either case specific types of personnel will be required and we must guard against the danger of "personal functionalization."⁴⁸

Personal functionalization leads us to become captives of our gadgets and specialties. However, if we are specialists for the sake of the mission, the mission reminds us that there are other aspects involved and our vision is then widened.

It is foolish to say that organizations and human institutions are inherently corrupt. Undoubtedly, large

⁴⁷World Conference on Church and Society (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967), p. 159.

⁴⁸Cox, p. 173.

organizations are often dysfunctional. But aside from the fact that they exist as a fact of life, there are some positive aspects that are important to consider. Faith manifests itself in some form. The original abstraction of the charismatic leader needs concretization in order for its communication. More specifically, in relation to bureaucracy, we are dealing with a technically superior organization. "Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction, and of material and personal costs"⁴⁹—to the extent that these do not depersonalize and overshadow the mission, they are positive.

There are two alternatives for "freeing" oneself from bureaucracies. Thomas Cden states that "It is a political axiom that to withdraw from involvement in structures of power is unconsciously to affirm the status quo."⁵⁰ By dropping out the individual or group loses understanding and rapport from the very group it seeks to change. An example of this is the non-voter. There-

⁴⁹Gerth and Mills, p. 214.

⁵⁰Cden, p. 49.

fore, Oden maintains the organization should be changed from within.

The other alternative is destruction of the present faulty institution. Caution is necessary here, for any change in institutional structure, even from within the structure, will invariably affect people. Furthermore, change movements and revolutionary groups tend to crystallize into institutions and once again betray the very movements from which they came.

There is an apparent consensus of opinion that a divided church defeats its own mission. If one accepts the koinonia function of the church as basic, church unity becomes a "prerequisite of mission."⁵¹ The ecumenical issue is one which requires both a theological and sociological approach; the church's relation to the world is of utmost importance.

Some of the developments leading to denominationalism have been mentioned above. Now many of the denominational leaders are in favor of church unity, realizing

⁵¹Daniel Callahan (ed.), The Secular City Debate (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 214.

that divisions have been caused by worldly influences such as exaggerated individualism. Today's problems of unity are not between denominations only but are also within denominations. As Harvey Cox says, "...the real ecumenical crisis today is not between Catholics and Protestants but between traditional and experimental forms of life."⁵²

Returning to Peter Berger, ecumenicity can be seen as a value from a practical point of view when we look at market competition. When competition reaches the point where it no longer brings results worth its cost, the competitors begin to merge. Prices are "fixed," competition is rationalized. This tending toward cartelization in a pluralistic society leads toward a development of comity and ecumenicity. The trend is not toward a monopolistic system, but rather toward an oligopolistic system.⁵³

Granted that ecumenicity is both desirable and theologically necessary, what sort of structure can be

⁵²Cox, p. 160.

⁵³Berger, pp. 142f.

devised that will allow both freedom and organic unity?

...the degree of unity which will be good for the projected ecumenical church is simply that which will keep it as unified as it needs to be in order to remain an effective center of action. This means that the local churches must be encouraged to pledge their loyalty to the larger Church, but that at the same time the central authority must not press its claims too hard.⁵⁴

Thus, administrative unity with local doctrinal autonomy is a valuable concept to remember in all of management.

Once again, the organization is here to stay. The church, if it is to have any kind of influence in the world, must have some sort of institutional expression. As we deal with life in the secular society, we deal with power structures, and the only way to combat power structures would seem to be with other power structures. Or is it possible to change the rules of the game? In any case, the responsible Christian is involved with organization.

There is no question that most of what we now

⁵⁴Snook, p. 53.

have as denominational structures and local church structures needs to be changed. For the most part they remain immobile and self-centered. Nevertheless, I believe that there is evidence that it is possible to change the institutional structure from within. It is important to realize that all institutional structures may not be worth changing. One of the crucial decisions each must make is with which institution he will cast his lot. I cannot work in all institutions, but I can work in one or some institutions. Traditional patterns must be re-examined, but I believe that the need is for reform rather than revolution at this time. We have all the organizations we need. The question is not one of changing traditional forms or reorganizing entire constitutions as much as one of how they are put together and used.

It is true that "...an institution which by virtue of its organizational ideology and economic basis can neither understand nor affirm revolutionary change cannot even make the first step in the pressing task of respond-

ing to God's work in the present social revolution."⁵⁵
That part of the institution that acts as dead-weight must be shed, but this does not necessarily mean the entire institution.

The place to begin church renewal is in the task of theological construction and re-rootage in church heritage. "Theological construction means...a return to painstaking and passionate intellectual effort, the willingness to confront the Christian faith with all the critical faculties of the mind and to find the means to articulate the faith in our own historical moment."⁵⁶ In order to respond to the world today, I am convinced that a theology of the church must be a relational theology of social change.

I have stated that there is only one criterion by which one can judge church organization--is it effectively accomplishing its mission? Is the Christian presence evident? In order for the mission to be accomplished, the following elements would seem to be essential for

⁵⁵Cox, p. 235.

⁵⁶Peter L. Berger, The Noise of Solemn Assemblies (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), p. 127.

church organization at each and every level: 1) capacity for internal change, 2) openness to other organizations, both sacred and secular, 3) full and effective use of "worldly" disciplines such as biology and sociology, 4) use of "non-church" professional workers such as community organizers, 5) competent and courageous leadership, 6) autonomy and individuality of the person, 7) imagination and experimentation, 8) concern for the powerless groups, 9) built in evaluative process, and 10) an effective communication system. These elements are necessary for true dialogue with the world. Permeated throughout must be the awareness of the provisionality of all present structures and the ultimacy of the imminent Kingdom of God.

The problem is not to combat bureaucracy as such, but to combat that tendency within it which leads toward "morphological fundamentalism." What I am searching for is some sort of built in mechanism which will keep the routinization of charisma from stifling individuality, and it may be that the answer is that there is none. We ap-

parently must depend on the "saving remnant" continually to bring us to a realization of our shortcomings. The church as an institution needs the surveillance and testimony of "conscientious objectors" from within so that it may in turn act as a social pioneer for all the world.

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